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Colonial Discourse and Tradition in John Dryden's *The Indian Emperour*

Abstract: This paper will focus on texts like Dryden's that nationalized colonization and thus justified it. Nationalistic works on the conversation about the 'New World' left out one key group: indigenous Americans. The transposition of European ideas about the Americas is evident in Dryden's work because of his interest in supporting or justifying the colonial ventures of the western hemisphere. *The Indian Emperour* itself connects to the European discourse on colonization through the dichotomy Dryden creates between the 'old' and 'new' world and the nobility of certain indigenous characters like Montezuma. *The Indian Emperour* most notably connects to later colonial discourse through Dryden's placement of the English people in the play. While the English are not physically present in Mexico, Dryden refers to his own collective nationality as a necessary replacement or superior successor to the lands of the 'New World.' In this paper, I argue that Dryden's idea of the necessary replacement, or the worthy colonizer, speaks heavily to later colonial themes and myths in North American literature, where various heroic figures act as intermediaries between the European 'civilized' world and the western frontier.

Keywords: John Dryden, *The Indian Emperour,* colonial, imperial, new world, drama, English

Introduction

As the continents of the western hemisphere became prominent sites of European imperialization in the seventeenth century, writers from various nations began to discuss these conquests through a variety of genres. *The Indian Queen* (1692) and *The Indian Emperour* (1667) were products of this popular colonial discourse in what has been termed by some historians 'The Age of Exploration.' Dryden's plays about the Mesoamerican world act as influential texts that perform common facets of European discourse on colonization. This study is interested in focusing on aspects of Dryden's play that connect to later colonial attributes located in mainly North American texts on the same subject. To do this, it is key to look at the sources Dryden himself used to create both *The Indian Queen* and *The Indian Emperour.* From there, the colonialist discussion among European writers will be traced through Enlightenment thought to the mythic formations of the American frontier that Americanists identify as pivotal to the westward expansion of the United States.

Unlike postcolonial studies, this paper will focus on texts like Dryden's that nationalized colonization and thus justified it. Steven Zwicker describes John Dryden's work as something that "came to embody an idea of national culture at a moment when ideas of empire and nationhood had more than begun to hold sway" (11). These nationalistic works on the conversation about the 'New World' left out one key group: the people who lived in the Americas. This transposition of purely European ideas about the Americas is evident in works such as Dryden's and others interested in supporting or justifying the colonial ventures of the western hemisphere. *The Indian Emperour* itself connects to the European discourse on colonization through the dichotomy Dryden creates between the 'old' and 'new' world. Also, the nobility of certain indigenous characters like Montezuma is evident in later Enlightenment thought and North American literature. *The Indian Emperour* most notably connects to later colonial discourse through Dryden's placement of the English people in the play. While the English are not physically present in Mexico, Dryden refers to his own collective nationality as a necessary replacement or superior successor

to the lands of the 'New World.' This idea of the necessary replacement, or the worthy colonizer, speaks heavily to later colonial themes in North American literature, where various heroic figures act as intermediaries between the European 'civilized' world and the western frontier. Whereas later pro-colonial theory often places this European figure in the physical space of the 'New World,' *The Indian Emperour* depicts a period before this enactment through performed anti-Spanish rhetoric and the references to the English audience in the pre-texts bookending the play itself. By establishing a connection between Dryden's drama and the North American colonial myth of the nineteenth century, we can see how perceptions of the 'New World' were informed by certain narratives that developed over the long period of conquest in the western hemisphere.

Dryden's Source Materials

John Dryden developed his dramatic material from accounts of Spanish conquest in Mesoamerica and, as many scholars contend, William Davenant's famous work *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru* (1658). Along with the historical records of conquest like the travel accounts of Bartolomé de las Casas and Samuel Purchas, Davenant's text and the performance it produced influenced Dryden's own 'New World' plays. *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru* thematized English superiority in a manner Dryden mimics in both *The Indian Queen* and *The Indian Emperour.* These English performances correspond to both las Casas' *The Tears of the Indians* (1656) and Purchas' *His Pilgrimage* (1613, 1614) in the way they pity the indigenous people under Spanish rule. For example, in the section "Of the Kingdome of Yucatan," Bartolomé de las Casas writes, "there might have been erected by the Spaniards many brave and large Cities where they might have liv'd as in a Paradise, had they not rendered themselves totally unworthy of any such benefits through their own enormities and impieties" (61-62). The impieties las Casas mentions include making "war upon these innocent Indians living peaceably in their houses, and offering injury to none, destroying many people" (62). A formula of indigenous pity and Spanish scorn presented in these accounts is reproduced in many English 'New World' dramas.

However, unlike las Casas, Davenant and Dryden use their 'New World' dramas to furnish overt English nationalism. Dougald MacMillan notes that Dryden models Davenant in various features of his own plays including "the 'Native Innocence' and happiness of the primitive Indians, prophecies of the coming of a conqueror, the effect on the natives of the first sight of the Spanish ships and of the men themselves" (359). The most notable aspect of Davenant's work is his anti-Spanish rhetoric. In the section titled "The Argument of the whole Designe, consisting of six entries," Davenant provides a simple explanation for the purpose of his performance. He writes, "the Designe is first to represent the happy condition of the People of Peru antiently, when their inclinations were governed by nature" (2). Shortly after this description, Davenant writes, "it likewise proceeds to the Spaniards Conquest of that Incan Empire, and then discovers the cruelty of the Spaniards over the Indians, and over all Christians" (3). John Dryden sought to similarly criticize Spanish conquest in the 'New World' after his English contemporary.

The performance of "Spanish-ness" is also on display in both *The Cruelty of the Spaniards in Peru* and *The Indian Emperour.* Ayanna Thompson notes that the anti-Spanish rhetoric of Davenant's pseudo-masque is displayed by using props. As she suggests, "racial difference had to be conveyed not by actions or words… but through props and costumes alone" (79). This was due, in part, to the Commonwealth's ban on plays during the eleven-year Interregnum of England. Racial difference between the Incans and the Spaniards could not be articulated through dialogue or speech. Props, clothing, adornments, and objects became the racial differentiator between groups of people. Whereas Incan characters were dressed in feathers, the conquistadores were signified through their use of "guns, dress, and instruments of torture" (Thompson 80). In the fifth entry of Davenant's work, Spanish conquistadores torture an Incan Priest of the Sun as he delivers a mournful speech. The priest laments:

> What Race is this, who for our punishment
> Pretend that they in haste from Heav'n were sent,
> As just destroyers of Idolatry?
> Yet will they not permit
> We should our Idolls quit,
> Because the Christian Lawe makes Converts free. (20)

From such a speech, Davenant is clearly criticizing the Spanish conquest and their supposedly Christian prerogatives for the Mesoamerican peoples. During a time of religious strife, many English writers denounced Catholicism in favor of Protestantism by showing the way Catholic nations brutalized indigenous people. Since Davenant wrote this performance during the Puritan-held English Commonwealth, the anti-Catholic aspects of the piece assert a sense of Protestant excellence.

Similarly, in *The Indian Emperour,* the trio of conquistadores who lead the conquest of the Aztec capital are signified by the objects they use to succeed in defeating Montezuma. Human torture devices once again become an object associated with the Spanish, as they use it on Montezuma and one of the Indian Priests of Tenochtitlan. Driven by a lust for wealth, Pizarro and a Christian Priest place Montezuma and the Indian High Priest on a torture rack. Pizarro states,

> Since neither threats nor kindness will prevail,
> We must by other means your minds assail;
> Fasten the Engines; stretch 'um at their length,
> And pull the steightned Cords with all your strength. (V. ii 11-14)

The anti-Catholic sentiment in this scene is quite clear. Rather than pursuing religious ends, the Christian Priest conspires with Pizarro to extract information from the tortured Aztecs. By implementing this scene in *The Indian Emperour,* William Davenant's piece on Spanish conquest in Peru is echoed. Of course, in *Cruelty,* Englishmen are also placed on the rack beside the Incans—a purely imagined event to prompt patriotism against Spain. Indeed, as MacMillan has noted, "Dryden had to combine the action of the conquest of Mexico with that of the conquest of Peru" (360). This is most notable in the placement of Francisco Pizarro, the conquistador responsible for conquering the Incans, in *The Indian Emperour.* Historian Andrés Reséndez claims that Pizarro's Peruvian conquest "had been achieved at a great human cost" (4). His ruthlessness prompted Spanish "friars and the crown officials to launch a reformist movement to change Spain's method of conquest and convince colonizers of the essential humanity of the Indians" (Reséndez 4). The character of Pizarro, then, is the perfect characterization of Spanish brutality in the Americas. By placing him in Mexico, MacMillan suggests that Dryden was then able to pin all the vices "the English were in the habit of attributing to their rivals in the exploitation of America" (360). The point of using torture devices to identify the Spanish and placing Francisco Pizarro in the play serves an English nationalistic goal. The negative connotations attached to the Spanish characters in both performances reveal the English consensus of Spanish colonization in Mesoamerica.

While there are many other similarities between Davenant's production and Dryden's play, it is the anti-Spanish rhetoric that is most influential to the discourse of English colonialism. Since the Spanish do not possess the inherent traits necessary to successfully colonize the 'New World,' conquest should be an English responsibility. This "black legend" of the Spanish conquistadores "alibied British imperialism, a form presumed superior to the Spanish cross-and-booty model, while noble savagism identified indigenes as relative primitives whose natural virtues and capacities were inferior to those of (Christian) Europeans" (Orr 115). In both performances, the characterization of the Spanish adds to the English colonial perceptions in the seventeenth century. Both Davenant and Dryden construct performances that promote

English superiority by depicting America's brutal subjugation to a Catholic nation. In Davenant's work, Englishmen even come to aid the Peruvian people by fighting against the yoke of Spanish oppression. Dryden does not pursue such an obvious style of patriotism, but he nonetheless calls on his own nation to consider and enact an 'improved' imperialism—one that advances Protestantism. In this way, Dryden's play interacts with earlier colonial texts that have similar intentions.

***The Indian Queen*: Prequel to Dryden's Play**

Since *The Indian Emperour* acts as a sequel to Dryden and Sir Robert Howard's *The Indian Queen,* looking at the differences and continuities between the two discloses aspects of colonialist writing in the seventeenth century. *The Indian Queen* follows the same Montezuma who figures prominently in *The Indian Emperour*, but in a different Mesoamerican world that has not yet been breached by colonial ventures. Instead, there is conflict between the Peruvian and Mexican leaders. Thus, the performances attached to these characters, the speeches delivered, and the traits of the characters all embody the European perceptions of a pre-colonial or, more accurately, a not-yet-conquered America. In the prologue, a young boy and girl announce the loss of an Eden-like state of being. Speaking first, the boy announces an awakening from a state of innocence or perfection where "neither heat could pierce, nor cold invade; / Where bounteous nature never feels decay / And opening buds drive falling fruits away" (4-6). The girl, Quevira, responds to her counterpart's distress by questioning, "Why should men quarrel here, where all possess / As much as they can hope for by success?" (7-8). Though the main conflict in *The Indian Queen* occurs between the two Mesoamerican empires, Mexico and Peru, this prologue is integral because it notes a drastic shift. This shift primarily occurs because of the turmoil and conflict existent between two imagined nations of the drama. Within this conflict, various characters of Peruvian and Mexican descent clash with each other. As JM Armistead argues, "through the clash of these passions, a higher law emerges that is essentially Christian in orientation, unbeknown to the pagan survivors it favors" (26). By starting *The Indian Queen* with such a prologue and advancing it into a Mesoamerican conflict, Dryden imagines a history that suits itself to colonization.

Another aspect of the prologue that suits itself to Dryden's own timeline of colonization is the prophecy that the young boy addresses. He says, "By ancient prophecies we have been told, / Our world shall be subdued by one more old" (11-12). From the outset of this play, then, colonization is hinted at as inevitability. Another way to show this inevitability, as Armistead points out, is that the indigenous peoples' deities referenced in *The Indian Queen* have been relegated to the mere role of prophecy. They can no longer act with any agency to impact or change the course of events, but simply predict the future with apparent accuracy. In place of the deities, "the course of Mexican history falls under the direction of those who would try to understand and cooperate with Providential change rather than of those who would force history to satisfy their own desires" (Armistead 30). In essence, Dryden hints that a shift from pagan to Christian rule is imminent in the Americas. For this transition to begin, indigenous leaders like Montezuma must possess some proto-Christian system of belief. By the end of *The Indian Queen,* "Montezuma [is] purged of thralldom to his own will and passions and, through the catalytic relationship with Orazia, reincarnate[s] the more Christian traits of Acacis" (Armistead 32). Therefore, Montezuma's transformation prepares the way for Spanish conquest which comes soon after in *The Indian Emperour.* In Act I, Scene II, of this sequel, Guyomar announces the arrival of the conquistadores with both wonder and fear. In speaking of his experience, the High Priest replies, "Old Prophecies foretell our fall at hand, / When bearded men in floating Castles Land" (123-124). With the arrival of the Spanish and the events that ensue as consequence, Dryden transposes the biblical framework of the Fall (Genesis 1-3) on the colonial account he is retelling in both *The Indian Queen* and *The Indian Emperour.*

For Dryden, historicizing the Christian conception of the Fall on the Americas starts with the prologue of *The Indian Queen* where the boy and girl announce a coming change to the innocent, perfect world. The remaining story of both *The Indian Queen* and *The Indian Emperour* details the Fall itself. Roger Martin argues that writers like Dryden added in their own religious frameworks on 'New World' narratives because they could not accept "that an entire, alternate, human world could develop, worship, and thrive without desire for, interest in, or need of Western Christianity" (325). Kathleen Wilson similarly claims that "the challenge in the seventeenth and for much of the eighteenth century was to explain unity in the face of difference and so uphold Christian orthodoxy" (10). From the Mesoamerican battles to the Spanish conquest of Tenochtitlan, Dryden structures both 'New World' plays around the Christian conception of the origins of humanity. González-Treviño, focusing on the feathers worn by the actors playing the indigenes, contends that such props "could be directly associated with a prelapsarian state of innocence, as if part of the world which had hitherto remained unknown to European eyes had somehow escaped the consequences of Adam's Fall" (109). While later colonial discourse examines the nature of innocence in the indigenous people of America more closely, there is a notable connection made here with Dryden's work. The main difference, however, is that the Mesoamerican characters in *The Indian Emperour* do experience the Fall through Spanish encroachment and their own inner conflict with each other. For example, Odmar betrays his own family in favor of the conquistadores who attack Tenochtitlan. As the conflict between the Aztecs and the Spaniards intensifies, Alibech attempts to first convince Guyomar to release the captured Cortés so that the starvation of their own people will come to an end. Guyomar refuses with a "bleeding heart" and chooses to serve Montezuma's empire regardless of the outcome (IV. Ii 94). Then, Alibech easily convinces Odmar by agreeing to marry him if he commits the treasonous act. He responds, "To save our Lives our Freedom I betray—/—Yet since I promis'd it I will obey; / I'le not my Shame nor your Commands dispute" (IV. ii 133-134). Odmar and Alibech attest the fallen state of the Aztecs in this drama. Thus, there are characters like Montezuma and Guyomar who exemplify proto-Christian virtue, as JM Armistead contends (26). At the same time, though, there are indigenes that possess traits contrary to Dryden's own religious morality.

The Spanish conquistadores in Dryden's play, however, do not represent the salvific mediator that might be expected in the biblical conception of the Fall and Redemption. On the contrary, as it has already been noted, the Spaniards in Dryden's work are "not heroic conquistadors, but fortunate opportunists" (Thompson 80). Indeed, their desire for wealth leads to the demise of characters that embody virtue and nobility. Despite this, Ter Ellingson notes that "the conquest of the Spanish is a foreordained outcome" (38). Along this line of argument, Ellingson suggests that "Dryden here, as in all his dramas, is not concerned with the clash of ethnic groups or cultures except to the extent that they provide plot, motivation, and coloring for the clash of noble-minded heroes" (38). In other words, Dryden is more concerned with demonstrating nobility in different characters from different backgrounds; Montezuma and Guyomar from Mexico, as well as Cortés from Spain, all reflect this trait. Once again, this line of argument returns to the biblical transposition that Dryden has laid out in his 'New World' dramas. The prologue in *The Indian Queen* asserts a fall from innocence, and the remaining plot of the two plays reflects a sort of providential inevitability where the 'moral' and 'immoral' characters meet to carry out a specific design. Though the Spaniards bring greater destruction to the Aztec Empire that they plunder, their entrance into Dryden's plot serves as the *felix culpa* moment from the perspective of English nationalism.

Montezuma's torture scene and subsequent suicide catalyze the *felix culpa* moment because of its Christological implications. In Act V, Scene II, when Pizarro and the Christian Priest bound Montezuma, the stage directions read that the two Spaniards "fasten [Montezuma and the Indian Priest] to the racks, and then pull them" (V. ii). Such imagery and performance of a gruesome scene draws heavily on the

conventions of Christ's crucifixion. While Montezuma does not die on the rack, his torture does lead to his eventual choice to commit suicide. In these moments of violence, Montezuma delivers eloquent speeches retorting the Spanish justification for torture, shattering all assumptions of Spanish superiority. During the back and forth, Montezuma says,

> That all Religions with each other Fight,
> While only one can lead us in the Right.
> But till that one hath some more certain mark,
> Poor humane kind must wander in the dark. (V. ii 55-58)

This "certain mark" of a true religion seems to have already penetrated Montezuma's psyche. It is this same sort of proto-Christianity that has already taken root in the emperor's person. For not only is he aware that his own deities are not 'true,' but he is also wholly suspicious of the Roman Catholicism professed by the conquistadores. Bridget Orr asserts that this dialogue between Amerindians and European colonizers was a common generic convention of the seventeenth century (119). In most intercourses of this nature, Dryden's included, the conquered acquires the upper hand. As Orr notes, "the rhetorical process thus reverses the conqueror's historic triumph with a rhetorical loss at the hands of a defeated enemy who is revealed as the victor's ethical and intellectual superior" (119). As a result, Montezuma becomes a sacrificial figure who proves to both the conquistadores and the English audience watching the production that Spanish colonization of Mexico is unjust. While he commits suicide because of his loss of empire, it is through his own sacrifice that he brings forth a potential route to redemption. This route serves Dryden's nationalistic interest because it is the English nation—its tolerance and its Protestantism—that will bring 'redemption' to the 'New World.' As Bridget Orr points out, many English texts of this period had the "constant drumbeat of anti-Catholic deist rhetoric that underscores the indigenes' readiness for conversion to Protestantism" (123). This is certainly the case in Dryden's *Indian Emperour.* The Fall of the 'New World' has already occurred and it is construed as a fortunate Fall because it enables the imagined natives of the land to discover their need for the true religion of a "certain mark" that only the English nation can provide.

Theology and "The Fall" in Colonial Discourse

The Protestant theological conceptions of "The Fall" and its attachment to the American continents extend well into other colonial texts and discourses. A notable connection is the Puritan idea of the errand in the wilderness. Like Dryden in the *Indian Emperour,* the Puritans of the New England colonies viewed history through a biblical framework. It was their duty to expand the Christian world into the western hemisphere. American studies scholar Sacvan Bercovitch writes, "By definition, the errand meant progress. It implied a teleology reaching from Genesis to the Apocalypse. As a community on an errand, New England was a movement from sacred past to sacred future" (34). The same thematic elements appear in *The Indian Queen* and *The Indian Emperour* from "The Fall" at the outset of the drama to Montezuma's death. Redemption has not yet been enacted in Dryden's play; there is a state of unfulfillment which aligns with Bercovitch's claim that the Puritan errand "was by definition a state of *un*fulfillment" (34). All these scenes in Dryden's two-part drama of the conquest of Mexico act together to point to a European religious history intent on justifying the importance of converting the entire globe to Christianity.

From a slightly different perspective, John Milton's epic, *Paradise Lost* (1667), also connects the Genesis 1-3 to the conversation on colonialism. Since both Milton's epic and Dryden's play were first made public in the 1660s, many of their viewpoints on imperialism coincide in different ways. In the epic, the very concept of Satan's journey from Pandemonium to the New World reflects European colonization of

the seventeenth century. For example, Satan speaks of the New World for humankind as "a place of pure bliss / In the purlieus of heaven, and therein plac'd / A race of upstart creatures" (II 832-834). These lines resemble seventeenth century era descriptions recorded of the natural landscape in the Americas populated by the indigenous people. Roger Martin contends that Satan's city of Pandemonium in many ways reflects the descriptions of Montezuma's Tenochtitlan (322). However, JP Conlan claims that *Paradise Lost* is an anti-Imperial epic, thus associating Satan with all European colonizers. This is perhaps most notable in Book XII, when the archangel Michael relays to Adam the horrors to come due to The Fall by telling him the accounts of Cain and Abel, the Great Flood, and the Tower of Babel. The first man's lament about the Tower of Babel especially connects to the European imperialism of the seventeenth century. Adam laments:

> O execrable son, so to aspire
> Above his brethren, to himself assuming
> Authority usurp'd, from God not given:
> He gave us only over beast, fish, fowl
> Dominion absolute; that right we hold
> By his donation; but man over men
> He made not Lord: such title to himself
> Reserving, human left from human free. (XII 64-71)

This passage, along with many others, relates in various ways to the imperialism occurring in the seventeenth century. While humankind does have dominion over the animal kingdom according to Christian theology, only unjust violence and bloodshed will occur when humans attempt to conquer other humans.

Many writers used the Edenic trope in reference to America for various reasons. In *Paradise Lost,* it is mostly anti-colonial as Milton likens Satan's journey to European conquest and empire. Despite this anti-imperial argument that Conlan asserts, he quickly notes that "Milton concedes, successful voyages—whether Satanic or colonial—however evil they may be, are still Providential. As God permitted them to occur, such voyages do fit into God's plan" (38). This is most evident in Book III of the epic when Milton addresses Protestant theology in the voice of God, attempting to explain theological conceptions of free will, omnipotence, and the existence of evil in the world (III 80-134). This portion of Book III, and really *Paradise Lost* as a whole, serves as a theodicy meant to position The Fall within the providential will—however successful Milton's attempt at this justification is beside the point in this context. Milton's epic coincides with Dryden's *The Indian Emperour* in that both view human history from Satan's infiltration of paradise to the colonization of the Americas as an act of providence, whether it leads to good or evil. In both texts, The Fall, however evil it seems, acts as the impetus to bring about or at least point to the need for redemption.

The belief that colonization was an act of providence in works like *The Indian Emperour* transposed a Christian perspective on a world barely exposed to Protestantism, effectively muting the indigenous people in America. This massive disconnect between worlds is performed immediately upon the opening curtain of *The Indian Emperour.* When the Spanish first arrive on the shores of Mexico, the trio of conquistadores discusses the "new happy Climate" on which they have been thrown (I. i 1). In speaking of this 'New World' Vasquez claims,

> As if this Infant world, yet un-array'd
> Naked and bare, in Natures Lap were laid.
> No useful Arts have yet found footing here;

> But all untaught and salvage does appear. (I. i 7-10)

Cortés, the leader of the expedition, quickly corrects Vasquez's claim. He responds:

> Wild and untaught are Terms which we alone
> Invent, for fashions differing from our own:
> For all their Customs are by Nature Wrought,
> But we, by Art, unteach what Nature taught. (11-14)

Not only does this immediately alert the audience to Cortés's apparent tolerance, but it also reveals that Dryden was intent on building "dialogues evoking the simplicity and innocence of Indians against the cruelty and avarice of Europeans" (Ellingson 38). At the same time, however, Ayanna Thompson points out that this opening scene clearly demonstrates their inability to construct the American continents in relation to Europe (88). Cortés's response to Vasquez "provides an explicit meta-commentary on the difficulties they are having both conceptualizing and constructing the New World linguistically" (Thompson 89). For Europeans, constructing an image of the western hemisphere was a challenge, and many ended up superimposing their own cultural, religious, and linguistic frameworks on this land and its people. Not only is this the case with the conquistadores of the play, but it is also so with John Dryden himself. Diana Taylor provides a vivid example of this in her article "Scenes of Cognition: Performance and Conquest" (2004). After summarizing the Amerindian perception of performance where "beliefs were rendered visible as acts," Taylor illustrates how Spanish colonists and friars deconstructed the natives' own performance-based culture by creating their own set of dramas (364). She explains, "The plays developed by the friars and acted by the native peoples set out to maintain native performance forms while transforming the content. Even though they were performed in native languages and looked familiar—staged with thousands of flowers, arches, artfully created landscapes, and fabulous stagecraft—the worldviews were radically different" (369).

This is undoubtedly the case in *The Indian Emperour* with the conquistadores even signaling to this issue at the very beginning of the play. The primary difficulty with colonial discourse is this wide disconnect between two very distinct cultures. Indigenous culture possessed its own set of beliefs and values which were essentially muted by European colonial discourse intent on applying Christian theology to the New World.

Continuities in Enlightenment Thought

Enlightenment thought attempted to bridge this gap between the 'old' and the 'new.' While European philosophers generally accepted Enlightenment discourse on colonialism, it was no less successful than the religious frameworks placed on the Americas in Dryden's play and other texts concerned with conquest. In an age of monarchical suspicion, philosophers like Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1761) were known for critiquing European society and government. One way he conducted this was through juxtaposing the nature of the Americas or any place considered a part of the 'New World' with societal structures of Europe. The civilizations of Europe once occupied the same natural condition as those claimed of the cultures in the Americas. From this line of thought, Rousseau claims, "there is hardly any inequality in the state of nature, all the inequality which now prevails owes its strength and growth to the development of our faculties and the advance of the human mind, and becomes at last permanent and legitimate by the establishment of property and laws" (182). In Rousseau's argument, the state of nature is best exemplified in the 'less civilized' places in the world—so, anywhere that is not Europe. Just as Dryden routinely returns to native innocence in concurrence with the biblical account of The Fall, Rousseau also utilizes this imagery to argue his own position. Though Dryden's own colonial conceptions coincide with Rousseau at first, the

two diverge in different ways. Whereas Dryden suggests the need for a responsible society to colonize America, Rousseau contends that this natural aspect of the 'New World' will always be advantageous to that of 'civil society.' Accordingly, through nature, "men would acquire a robust and almost unalterable constitution" (Rousseau 19). In this way, the imagined natural world of the Americas can contribute to colonial success through the way it reinforces a person's ability to reconnect with the natural, uncorrupted world. Successful colonization becomes an immersive experience where individuals should attempt to embrace the natural world available to them in the Americas.

Though Jean-Jacques Rousseau perceived this progression from nature to civilization as something inevitable, certain aspects of colonial discourse sought to rediscover this natural condition to bring forth a better society. Even though Dryden's play was originally performed well before Rousseau's lifetime, something like this philosophical framework is transpiring in *The Indian Emperour.* The heroic figure in a play termed a "heroic drama" is the likely catalyst for this process of rediscovery. Various scholars have attempted to identify the hero of *The Indian Emperour.* Some claim Montezuma or Cortés, but Ayanna Thompson provides the most valid argument. From her own viewpoint, the English audience acts as the hero of the play despite their absence in the performance itself. She claims that Dryden and his audience "become the heroic, and, of course, the heroic becomes codified as essentially English through the establishment of the white/right gaze" (Thompson 76). This heroism is wholly constructed in the texts bookending the performance itself—the prologue, epilogue, and the dedicatory letter written to the Duchess of Monmouth. Thompson notes that the dedication in particular frames English heroism in both the audience and the author. For example, Dryden writes to the Duchess, "under your Patronage Montezuma hopes he is more safe than in his Native Indies: and therefore comes to throw himself at your graces feet" (25). This very phrase suggests Montezuma requires some level of protection that only an English noble can provide. Dryden continues, "[Montezuma] begs only that when he shall relate his sufferings, you will consider he is an Indian Prince, and not expect any other Eloquence from his simplicity, then that, with which his griefs have furnished him. His story is, perhaps the greatest, which was ever represented in a Poem of this nature" (25).

Through this dedication, Dryden esteems Montezuma but still places him as one subservient to English nobility and in need of protection. Gonález-Treviño notes that indigenous characters, both on the stage and in actual interactions with the English, were "designed to make them appear magnificent, but inferior and subservient" (114). *The Indian Emperour* enacts this paradoxical state of magnificence and inferiority through the pretexts of the drama itself. By doing this, Dryden effectively places the image of the hero on the English audience and himself rather than any character in the play. As Thompson argues, this construction "provides instructions for the English to substitute their wit and judgment for the purported Spanish heroism. By literally rewriting history, Dryden creates a space in which the English conquer by their social graces" (96). Not only is it English responsibility to protect the indigenous people through pity, but they are now labeled as the heroes of Dryden's own nationalistic 'New World' creation.

The Hero of *The Indian Emperour*

This leads us to the question of Cortés's own identity in the play. Many critics suggest Cortés serves as a stand-in for "English-ness" in this drama. Yet, he is still associated with the brutality of Spanish conquest. In the dedicatory epistle to this heroic drama, Dryden writes, "I have neither wholly follow'd the truth of the History nor altogether left it: but have taken all the liberty of a Poet, to adde, alter, or diminish" (25). This is certainly the case when one looks at the historical Hernán Cortés. According to the historian Reséndez, Cortés's entire mission to Mexico started when he defied the Spanish governor of Cuba's orders (16). Though Dryden characterizes the conquistador as noble and virtuous, Ayanna Thompson argues that Cortés is complicit in the colonial violence depicted in the play (92). Besides the

fact that the historical Hernán Cortés is anything but heroic, John Dryden imagines his character as the in-between for Spanish baseness and English virtue. Therefore, his Spanish nationality acts as the main drawback to his potential to embody the heroic. As Armistead mentions, "Cortés himself clings to a higher vision despite the pull downward of his nation" (31). By placing this conquistador in the drama, Dryden demonstrates that both nationality and integrity are necessary facets to successful colonization. The best example of Cortés's own shortcomings occurs at the very end of the play when he discusses the aftermath of the Spanish-Aztec battle with the defeated Montezuma. Cortés tells Montezuma to "speak not such dismal words as wound my Ear" when the dethroned emperor considers death as his only option (V. ii 220). The virtuous conquistador believes that he can find a way to restore some of what the emperor lost due to the battle. In response, Montezuma says,

> Name life no more;
> 'Tis now a Torture worse than all I bore:
> I'le not be brib'd to suffer Life, but dye
> In spight of your mistaken Clemency.
> I was your Slave, and I was us'd like one;
> The Shame continues when the Pain is gone. (V. ii 228-233)

Shortly after this sorrowful speech, Montezuma commits suicide, showing the audience how Cortés's choice to conquer Tenochtitlan led to the Indian Emperor's ultimate demise. Thompson contends that Montezuma's speech unveils the fact that "there are no differences between Cortés, Pizarro, and the Christian Priest" (92). While Cortés is shown to be noble and virtuous throughout the drama, his actions usher in the same consequences as those already set forth by the Spanish villains.

Dryden's combination of national and natural identity diverges from Rousseau's assertion that society corrupts and "people in their natural state are fundamentally good" (Buckingham 158). In *The Indian Emperour,* it is only Spanish or non-Protestant society that causes corruption. By extension, the Mesoamerican society of Montezuma, though noble in many regards, is corrupted partially by conquest but also due to their own 'fallen state' detailed in the prologue of *The Indian Queen*. By beckoning to the English audience, Dryden exhibits his nation's eagerness "to stress the way in which their nation was unique" (Wilson 5). This cultural uniqueness is one based on superiority to both the Spanish conquistadores and the Aztecs of Mexico. Contrary to Rousseau's belief that "the laws imposed by society condemn [humanity] to a life 'in chains,'" Dryden's play distinguishes England as the exception to this later philosophical framework (Buckingham 158). The irony, of course, lies in the fact that Dryden would later convert to Catholicism despite the general disdain for the religion in England towards the end of the seventeenth century. Again, Rousseau's treatise on the inequality of humankind was published years after *The Indian Emperour,* but comparing the discourse in the two texts presents the connections and progression of European colonialist thought.

By establishing Cortés as one who is not the hero of the drama, *The Indian Emperour* ends with a vacuum; no one has taken up the mantle where the conquistador has failed. For instance, Guyomar and Alibech leave Mexico as exiles of their own territory. Guyomar describes their place of exile as one of "Thin herbage in the Plains, and Fruitless Fields, / The Sand no Gold, the Mine no Silver yields" (V. ii 370-371). In this place, Guyomar confides, "No Spaniards will that Colony destroy," hinting at the lust for wealth that seems a quintessential trait of the conquistadores (V. ii 373). To this plan of exile, Cortés responds with the final lines of the play:

> First your Great Father's Funeral Pomp provide:
> That done, in Peace your Generous Exiles guide;

> While I loud thanks pay to the powers above,
> Thus doubly Blest, with Conquest, and with Love. (376-379)

The ending of *The Indian Emperour* is not heroic whatsoever. The honorable characters face almost utter ruin—Montezuma dies and Guyomar must flee to exile with Alibech. Additionally, Almeria attempts to murder Cydaria before killing herself, and Odmar dies because of his betrayal. All of this occurs because of Cortés's conquest in the 'New World,' and the play ends with a sense of dissatisfaction. While it may be considered that this dissatisfaction is a result of a twenty-first century reading of the text, Ayanna Thompson contends that this was Dryden's intention with his seventeenth century audience. By ending the play in this fashion, the heroism "resides in the master playwright who constructs the tale and the cultured English audience who receive the tale" (Thompson 94). This sense of dissatisfaction upon the curtain fall is "a substitute for heroism" (Thompson 94). Through this, Dryden signifies that the English are the only colonizers capable of responsible conquest in the 'New World' because of their tolerance and sympathy to indigenous plight. Yet, the English did not, nor ever would, physically rule the colonies of Mesoamerica at any point in the centuries spanning the colonial age. Therefore, this concept serves as the foundation for colonial discourse interested in producing a figure deemed "the worthy colonizer" and subsequently the necessary replacement of the indigenous people.

Ideas of Colonial Succession in European Texts on the Americas

This idea of the worthy replacement continually appears throughout colonial discourse, especially in North American literature. Whereas Dryden illustrates an intermediate replacement in Cortés and a mere cultural conquest with the English audience, later texts expand this notion by positioning successors in the physical space of the Americas. Characters like Natty Bumppo from James Fenimore Cooper's *Leatherstocking Novels*, Hugh Glass from *The Revenant* novel and film, and the legendary figure of Daniel Boone all extend the necessary replacement trope in European-American colonial discourse. Bridget Orr reasons that many colonial texts characterize the cultures of America as one of "primitive religion, adherence to the law of nature and pre-state political practices that anticipate, if they do not fully coincide with, Revolution principles" (124). Hence, the indigenous world acts as a precursor to an idealized American society founded through colonization. In Dryden's play, the primary method to display native 'primitivity' is through human sacrifice. In Act I, Scene II, the High Priest refers to this practice before Montezuma or any of the other indigenous characters are introduced. The priest pronounces,

> The Incense is upon the Alter plac'd
> The bloody Sacrifice already past.
> Five hundred Captives saw the rising Sun,
> Who lost their light ere half the race was run. (I. ii 4-7)

By placing human sacrifice at the forefront of the drama, the audience of the play is forced to view Montezuma and his subjects through this lens of 'barbarity' without any sort of contextualization explaining this important religious practice. This technique affixes itself with Sharae Deckard's suggestion that "the European imagination of a paradisal Nueva España would be continually disturbed by memories of the allegedly 'infernal' Aztecs" (31). Just as *The Indian Emperour* illustrates Spanish inferiority, it also attempts to primitivize the Mesoamericans. The dual scenes of torture at the beginning and the end of the play connote the primordial nature of the indigenous on one hand and the base temperament of the Spanish on the other. From Ayanna Thompson's configuration, the English audience is then constructed as the better combination of both (97). They have the virtue that the Spanish lack, and they can also develop the nobility derivative of the American natural world. In other words, Dryden identifies the

English colonist as the figure who can effectively 'civilize' the 'New World' by first learning the noble nature of the American landscape.

This thematic element has been touched on in greater detail by Americanists and literary critics interested in the colonial discourse of this period. Richard Slotkin, in *Regeneration through Violence* (1973), explicates the method through which early European-Americans sought to develop a mythic hero representative of their own experience. Accordingly, the existence of the native plays an integral role in the mythic formation. Slotkin contends that indigenous characters in literature appear "as a representative of the kind of heroism that natural, uncultivated, American man is capable of" (189). This representation is also evident in *The Indian Emperour* when Montezuma becomes a mouthpiece for English Protestantism in Act I, Scene II. Discussing the prospect of religion and monarchical sovereignty with the Spanish conquistadores, Montezuma continually rebukes their attempts to claim their own king as a sovereign lord. Montezuma asks, "by what right pretends your King to be / This Soveraign Lord of all the World, and me?" (I. ii 280-281). Pizarro claims that the priest of Spain "who represents on Earth the pow'r of Heaven" grants the Spanish with the right to conquer Mexico (283). Montezuma, always a step ahead the Spanish from a rhetorical standpoint, counters this claims by saying:

> Ill does he represent the powers above,
> Who nourishes debate not Preaches love;
> Besides what greater folly can be shown?
> He gives another what is not his own. (285-288)

Montezuma fulfills a heroic role that the worthy colonizer figure, in this case the English, will one day supersede. As Slotkin writes, "Even though the Indian is consistently portrayed as inferior to whites, his presence remains necessary to the revelation of the heroic stature of the Anglo-American hero" (189). This also appears in the dedicatory epistle where, as mentioned before, Dryden assumes the character of Montezuma will be safe under the patronage of the Duchess of Monmouth (25). In this way, the English hero is realized by protecting and pitying the plight of the Aztec people. Elements of this heroic realization thoroughly permeate colonial discourse in American literature. The most famous example, perhaps, is Natty Bumppo's relationship with his Mohican counterpart, Chingachgook, in *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). Cooper characterizes the Anglo-American protagonist as "a good deal touched at the calm suffering of his companion," as the Mohican details the tragic extinction of his tribe (26). Dryden's English audience in his heroic drama mirrors these later colonizer-heroes.

Dryden's play functions as a seed of colonial discourse that would later spread and take root in literary texts that attempted to justify colonization and form mythic depictions of the Americas. *The Indian Emperour* accentuates the empty space where a 'worthy colonizer' must fill to successfully conquer and replace the indigenous peoples of the Americas. In her influential text, *The Lay of the Land* (1975), Annette Kolodny focuses on these frontier heroes as the locus of colonialist expansion in the New World. She claims that authors like James Fenimore Cooper realized "that the human social community, in its various forms, could not maintain a pastoral harmony" (Kolodny 114). As a result, the American novelist, and many other writers at the time, developed an archetypal figure who "alone [could] enjoy the darkened forest recesses without threatening to become either destructive or intrusive" (Kolodny 89). Aspects of Dryden's portrayal of both Spain and England in *The Indian Emperour* coincide with Kolodny's argument. Cortés and the Spanish fail to maintain the idyllic state of the nature in Mexico, tainting it with corrupt violence and bloodshed. As is evident by now, this failure signifies the necessity for a superior (English) figure to supplant them in their colonial ventures. Thus, there is a clear progression in colonial discourse from the time of John Dryden to the 'Manifest Destiny' of the United States.

In later constructions, this replacement figure never resides within the 'civilized' regions of the American continent. On the contrary, this figure occupies a "scene on the very brink of time" where they may live in direct relation to the indigenous people in the uncolonized lands of America or the frontier (Lewis 99). In this space, such a figure essentially acts as the symbolic conduit through which the natural wilderness can be conquered and 'civilized.' This ideology of progression is apparent in both religious and philosophical frameworks that address imperialism to some degree. Notably, Slotkin claims that this belief is evident in the Jeffersonian view of natural law where "civilization [is] the inevitable product of natural law, the realization of its inherent purpose or design" (301). Indeed, this notion would continue well into the nineteenth century when the historian Frederick Jackson Tuner delivered his famous "Frontier Thesis" at the World's Fair in Chicago in 1893. In his paper, Turner writes:

> The peculiarity of the American institution is, the fact that they have been compelled to adapt themselves to the changes of an expanding people—to the changes involved in crossing a continent, in winning a wilderness, and in developing at each area of this progress out of the primitive economic and political conditions of the frontier into the complexity of city life. (1-2)

The Turner Thesis is similar in its exceptionalism to John Dryden's portrayal of his English audience in *The Indian Emperour.* Writing about the constructions of wilderness and frontier in American thought, William Cronon suggests that Turner's ideas embody the "academic statement of this myth" that "had been part of American cultural traditions for well over a century" (13). Turner's Thesis even echoes ideas and attitudes evident in earlier colonial discourse, including *The Indian Emperour* and other European texts. This idea is deeply nationalistic, and, as Cronon points out, the "wild country became a place not just of religious redemption but of national renewal, the quintessential location for experiencing what it meant to be American" (13). Whereas later pro-colonial fiction locates and explores the livelihood of this archetypal frontier figure through which European civilization may expand, John Dryden's play stands at a precipice of a colonial myth, identifying the need for a figure deemed "the worthy colonizer."

Conclusions

Overall, Dryden's play participates in colonial discourse in a variety of ways that have extended even into this present moment. While it is by no means the originator of such European discussions revolving around the 'New World,' it does display ideas of imperialism foundational to later literary texts interested in similar themes. From transposing religious worldviews on the American continent to juxtaposing the 'old' world with the 'new,' each of these conceptualizations has developed throughout time, erasing indigenous culture as it has advanced. Central to this specific aspect of discourse across the centuries of colonization and expansion is the European figure of colonial heroism. Dryden points to this archetypal figure by detailing the shortcomings of the indigenous and Spanish alike. In later literary texts, this heroic figure plays a predominant role in colonialism by adapting to the natural law of the Americas while also bringing forth European civilization. Hence, in Dryden's work, the mythic figure of colonialism has not yet arrived. By the time North American narratives are being produced and published in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a mythic hero of the 'frontier' exists on the forefront of the push to the west. By looking at the texts that influenced John Dryden's creation of *The Indian Emperour,* one can then follow the progression of these colonial ideas to formulate a timeline or chronology of progression for the mythic frameworks of European imperialism. In doing this, we can see just how damaging this discourse has been to those American cultures that were muted, erased, or dehumanized for the purpose of European 'progress.' It also allows us to locate where our own perspectives may be informed by the colonial discourse from centuries past. Identifying the influence of the European colonial imagination in history,

literature, and culture that still exists today is the first necessary step to recover what was lost to the hands of imperialism.

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Restor(y)ing Indigenous Sovereignty in Cherie Dimaline's *Empire of Wild*

Abstract: A fascinating, multi-layered narrative, *Empire of Wild* was Indigo's Best Book of 2019. Love story intersects with the reclamation of Indigenous sovereignty as a Métis woman in search of her lost husband gets in the way of neocolonialist interests. The article looks at how the novel uses the *rogarou*, a canine-human monster found in French-Canadian and Métis oral traditions, its meanings constructed in different discourses, to restore and 're-story' the Métis in their homeland through the agency of Indigenous womanhood. In discussing the conflict between the main character, Joan, and the man who holds her husband in his power, I endeavor to demonstrate how the novel turns the colonialist discourse of Indigenous savagery on its head, exposes the dynamics of "settler memory" (Kevin Bruyneel), and engages in "re-solution" (Layli Long Soldier) as an act of meaning making from a Métis subject position. Joan's dual otherness as a Métis (and a) woman reclaims Métis sovereignty through performing it, her (becoming) story—a process of Métis resistance and reemergence.

Keywords: Métis, rogarou, (neo)colonialism, sovereignty, story

Introduction(s)

When Joan Beausoliel's husband, Victor, disappears without a trace after a fight over selling Joan's inherited land to a development company, she engages in a desperate search for the love of her life. While Joan is away looking for Victor, her beloved grandmother is killed, apparently by wolves. Joan accidentally discovers Victor under a new identity. He is now a preacher traveling with a group of missionaries and he doesn't recognize his wife. When Joan insistently follows the missionaries to get her husband back, she finds herself in the midst of a much larger plot. Joan's Métis community in the fictional town of Arcand in Canada is facing the threat of dispossession, conducted with the same old tools of colonialism—conjoined missionary activity and violence—adapted to operate in a contemporary context. Joan's journey to rescue Victor and bring him home is a decolonial errand, predicated on Indigenous presence in body and in story, reclaiming Indigenous sovereignty on Indigenous land. Equipped with traditional Métis stories, and with her teenage nephew as a helper, Joan performs homecoming as re-placement within land, a political act of "re-solution" of the kind Layli Long Soldier envisages in her poetry volume *Whereas.*[1]

[1] In *Whereas* (2017), a response to an apology never publicly offered to Native Americans, Oglala Lakota poet Layli Long Soldier writes: "Whereas re-/solution's an act/ of analyzing and re-/ structuring complex/ ideas into simpler/ ones so I place/ a black bracket/ on either side of/ an [idea] I cordon it/ to safety away/ from national re-/ solution the threat/ of re-/ ductive [thinking]" (82). S.J. Res. 14 of April 30, 2009 "urge[d] the President to acknowledge the wrongs of the United States against Indian tribes […] in order to bring healing to this land," whereas the Congress admitted to "a long history of official depredations and ill-conceived policies by the Federal Government regarding Indian tribes." The President's signing of the Resolution with no publicity raised the question whether he fulfilled his obligation (Capriccioso). "The silence around the signing deepened our invisibility," Layli Long Soldier commented (qtd. in Madeson). She performs a "*re*writing and *re*righting" (Tuhiwai Smith 28): "Whereas Native Peoples are […] people with a deep and/ abiding […] in the […], and for millennia Native Peoples/ have maintained a powerful […] connection to this land,/ as evidenced by their […] and legends" (*Whereas* 84). I see "re-solution" as a concept undergirding a political act of *finding another solution*, one to honor Indigenous peoples' presence, in place of the

The prologue, which references "a new hunt," sets the stage and the stakes for the story that is to unfold: "Old medicine has a way of being remembered, of haunting the land where it was laid. People are forgetful. Medicine is not" (1). Dimaline's preference for the paratactic phrasing of Indigenous storytelling, which seeks to engage the audience through reflection and understanding rather than transmit a ready-made message through an "unequivocal cause-effect relation" specific to Western style (Kroeber 5), suggests her construction of the narrative as "terristory," a term for

> […] conceptualizing [the] unity of land and narrative. […] Terristory is a relation, or rather a plural and ongoing set of relations. It is the mode through which Indigenous people are attached to community and to the earth. Even for Indigenous people who have been separated from their homelands […], terristory can provide a ground of belonging, in a way that is far more than metaphorical. (Cariou, *Terristory* 2)

Taking inspiration from Linda Tuhiwai Smith's concepts of "rewriting and righting" (28) and Layli Long Soldier's idea of "re-solution," I propose that Cherie Dimaline *restores* and *re-stories* Indigenous sovereignty by "revers[ing] the trajectory of signification" (Cariou, "Terristory" 1) through which (ongoing) colonialist practices and/ of meaning making narrate the Native out of the land. Warren Cariou agrees with other authors on viewing "story at the nexus of the tensions among colonization, Indigenous resistance and Indigenous sovereignty" (1).[2] For Emma LaRocque, "Métis literature [inclusive of 'literatures spoken, sung, performed, painted, carved, engraved, pictographed' and 'now cybered'] will reach as far forward as the next 'new peoples' generate text" ("Contemporary" 131). Cherie Dimaline's re-generative narrative *re*-places the Métis as Indigenous people on the storied land of their lived experience. It exudes

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historically deleterious dual answer to the "Indian problem"—military action against the "Indian" deemed hostile and/or forced assimilation. In Long Soldier's re-writing of the Congressional Resolution as "re-solution," bracketed gaps are graphic protections against definitions that rely on the stereotypes justifying the inevitable vanishing of the "Indian." The gaps do not signify the absence of the Native, but a trickster-like gesture of discarding frozen images and meanings, which reminds of Vizenor's character Almost Browne selling blank books, with space for imagining stories from memory and everyday connection to the land, unlike those taught in schools—"places to park a mind rather than drive a mind" (Vizenor 7). The U.S. "invisible apology" (Madeson) was criticized for its failure to create the right context for reconciliation between the settler state and Indigenous peoples, of the kind the Canadian and Australian Prime Ministers' public apologies claimed to inaugurate. Retrospectively, though, these governments' politics of apology are seen as clearing settler states of historical guilt while maintaining colonialist modes of thinking and acting. Wakeham discerns "a strategic management of liability by framing past wrongs in terms of historically delimited, specific injuries rather than acknowledging the systemic and ongoing practices of colonialism" (3). Coulthard speaks of "a decisive shift in the modus operandi of colonial power" in Canada through "the hegemonization of the recognition paradigm" (3-4), which "continue[s] to facilitate the *dispossession* of Indigenous peoples of their land and self-determining authority" through the practice of "so-called 'negotiations'" allowing for capitalist-colonialist access to Indigenous resources with permission from communities reduced to dependency prior to consultations to speed up the process (7).

[2] Cariou remarks on "Indigenous literature and, increasingly, Indigenous film, visual art and digital culture [being] deeply concerned with enacting and representing Indigenous relationships to the land" ("Terristory" 1). He argues for "think[ing] of land and stories as *two aspects of the same phenomenon*" (2; author's emphasis). His exemplification of "[g]eography […] as a mnemonic device" (3) resonates with Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's story about Nishnaabeg Elders who participated in a mapping project back in the 1980s, a late twentieth-century response to the stereotype of *vacuum domicillium*, documenting traditional land use to help reduce the impact of industrial activity on Indigenous lands. "We marked down hunting grounds and fishing sites, berry patches, ricing camps, and medicines spots. We marked down birthplaces and graves. We marked down places where stories happened," Simpson writes; she proposes centering "Indigenous resurgence" around "the maps those Elders carried in their bodies" (loc. 275, 304).

a sense of survival which resonates with her view of success as the practice of living within a Métis intellectual framework:

> As an Indigenous person, survival is success. […] Is that the best we can hope for, just survival? […] Did I mean breathing, being allowed to participate in life as a human, the mere act of being alive? […] When we arrive at survival, who exactly are we going to be that ensures the success of that initial achievement? […] Because survival is only successful when we can see with our own eyes and measure with our own tools, who and what we are. This is true resistance. Anything else is just assimilation and breathing […]. (Dimaline, "Survival") [3]

The description of the small Métis community living in Arcand is imbued with a sense of historical tragedy and tenacious recovery, reminding of a history of dispossession and displacement happening in the colonialist/ imperialist interplay of expansion-extraction and racial definitions of difference:

> The people who lived in Arcand were brought from another place, moved off Drummond Island when it was handed over to the United States in 1828. They were halfbreeds, the children of French voyageurs and First Nations mothers, and Métis people who had journeyed from Manitoba. The new colonial authorities wanted the land but not the Indians […]. They landed on the rolling white sands of the Georgian Bay and set up their new homes across from the established town that wouldn't welcome them. […] Over the years, without treaty and without wealth, the halfbreeds were moved away from the shorelines where million dollar cottages were built in a flurry of hammers on lumber […]. Family by family, the community was pushed up the road. (1-2)

With hybridity understood as a disempowering lack of racial purity, something unclean and uncanny, halfbreed-ity leaves the Métis—literally—neither here nor there. LaRocque argues that the romanticized image of the Métis as perpetual "roaming transients with little or no sense of rootedness to home and lands, to homelands" gained currency as a way "to hide the fact of Métis displacement which was not by choice" ("Place" 180). Many Métis authors insist on the tension between lower-case-"m" *métis* and capitalized-"M" *Métis* as forms of identification—Chelsea Vowel calls it the "little *m* and big *M*" dispute (*Indigenous* 61)—which complicates the issue of Métis identity. While *métis*, represented in history and literature as a site of uncertainty "between the chasms of civilization and savagery" (LaRocque, "Place" 182), points to the "historic focus on hybridity" in contrast to purity in a colonially imposed regime of "binary truths" (Legault 78, 79), the term *Métis* reflects a sense of nationhood which goes beyond the tendency "to universalize" (LaRocque, "Contemporary" 132) the biological *métissage* the little *m* implicates, and centers on the "process of group identity formation in the service of a united (though exclusive) political and cultural community" (Legault 115). Métis nationhood involves a sense of tenure in place according to Indigenous peoplehood—"kinship, government, world view, and cosmic community" (Champagne, qtd. in Legault 116), while valuing the process of merging and journeying as (re)emergence on land involved in their ethnogenesis.

[3] Indigenous success is articulated in *Empire of Wild* along the lines of what Glen Coulthard calls "grounded normativity"—the "place-based foundation of Indigenous decolonial thought and practice […] by which [he means] the modalities of Indigenous land-connected practices and longstanding experiential knowledge that inform and structure [Indigenous] ethical engagements with the world and […] relationships with human and nonhuman others over time" (*Red Skins* 13).

The dislocation and further movement into marginality following the defeat of Métis resistance under the leadership of Louis Riel in the 1880s are referenced in *Empire of Wild* as foundational of Métis identity.[4] This legendary event in the Métis troubled history was centered on their sense of distinctness as a people and entitlement to land claims, both ignored as their world was being caught within the colonial/ imperial game:

> Catholic by habit, they prayed on their knees for the displacement to stop, for the Jesus to step in and draw a line […]. Those among them who carried medicine also laid down coarse salt as protection against the movement. This salt came from the actual bones of one particular Red River family, who drew their own boundaries when the hand of God did not reach down to do it for them. (1)

But Métis-ness also means an unfaltering reemergence in the wake of displacement and exclusion; the novel references the construction of road allowance communities: "And the halfbreeds? They got the small settlement up a dirt road. They got Arcand" (3).

Cherie Dimaline writes Métis "political memory" (Bruyneel 4) as inscribed with a sense of distinct peoplehood, founded in journeying on land and/ as relating to it, and existing in story. Emma LaRocque uses the concept of Métis "landedness," which combines place and community—"attachment, rootedness, […] [f]amilial-ity" in a "place where we become familiar with pots and pans, woodpiles and waterpails. Or computers and iPods." She argues that landedness "for the Métis remains an unbroken bond" ("Place" 179). So is the Métis attachment to their tightly knit heritage of Catholicism and Indigenous worldviews. Dimaline revisits the Métis oral tradition of the *rogarou*, an evil, human-canine hybrid creature, a cultural product which combines the French werewolf—the *loup-garou*, and a cannibal monster found in the lore of Indigenous nations with whom French *voyageurs* and *coureurs de bois* came into contact in the "New World"—the *windigo*. The Métis use *rogarou* stories to warn people about the risks of inappropriate behavior:

> Broke Lent? *The rogarou will come for you.*
> Slept with a married woman? *Rogarou will find you.*
> Talked back to your mom in the heat of the moment? *Don't walk home. Rogarou will snatch you up.*
> Hit a woman under any circumstance? *Rogarou will call you family, soon.*
> Shot too many deer, so your freezer is overflowing but the herd thin? […] *Rogarou knows by now.* (3)

Empire of Wild is a *rogarou* tale in a contemporary context, in which destructive internalized colonialism and the dismissal of the Indigenous in light of the old stereotype of savagery remain real and recognizable. In this article, I argue that Dimaline's story of a return of the *rogarou* undermines "settler memory," which Kevin Bruyneel reads as a narrative assemblage predicated on the obfuscation of Indigenous presence and colonial violence, while turning Indigeneity into an object of desire, in a "complicated absent/ present dynamic" (2). In Dimaline's articulation, the *rogarou* is a figure of warning from an Indigenous perspective and a site of Indigenous sovereignty reclamation through affirming the continuing relevance of traditional Métis stories:

> Long after that bone salt, carried all the way from the Red River, was ground to dust, after the words it was laid down with were not even a whisper […], the stories of the rogarou kept the community in its circle, behind the line. When the people forgot what they had asked for in the beginning—a place to live, and for

[4] LaRocque quotes other authors to say that there are "many roads to Red River," implying there's no uniformity about "Metis identity or identities" ("Contemporary" 132). The Red River resistance remains, however, a landmark of Métis experience.

> the community to grow in a good way—he remembered, and he returned on padded feet, light as stardust on the newly paved road. (4)

The Rogarou and a Métis Woman Becoming Story

In her story about Nishnaabeg Elders getting involved in a mapping project to demonstrate Indigenous land occupation and use in hopes of reducing dispossession, Simpson comments bitterly—"as if dispossession occurs by accident or out of not knowing, rather than being the strategic structure it is" (loc. 252). Bruyneel argues that the dispossession of the Indigenous cannot be separated from settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy. He views "white settlerness as a subject position and structural formation" (9) in a constant repositioning, in line with a "process-oriented approach" (Rita Dhamoon, qtd. in Bruyneel 8); settler colonialism is not a "contained, unchanging […] phenomenon but […] an assemblage maintained in a 'dynamic and continuous' process implicating socioeconomic, cultural, ideological, and political practices, discourses, institutions, and actors" (8). In relation to settler colonialism, settler memory is its "productive capacity" to reproduce settler status by performing a disavowal of violence against, and dispossession of, the Indigenous and by constructing "hierarchies of Otherness" along the lines of Indigeneity, race, gender and sexuality, etc (Dhamoon, qtd. in Bruyneel 9). The disavowal of conquest, a conscious attitude and not the result of "not knowing," works to produce about Indigeneity the "colonial unknowing" (Bruyneel 3)—a way of preserving settler status through absence-*ing* Indigenous displacement and dispossession and keeping the Native as a background trace in the story of the settler society's distinctness and becoming.[5] To "settler memory" Dimaline's novel counterposes a politics of (re) "generative refusal" (Simpson, loc. 3875) [6] manifested in choices that represent alternatives rooted in "our [Indigenous] intellectual systems [as] our responsibilities, […] an extension of our bodies and an expression of our freedom" (loc. 319).

Joan's grandmother, Angelique, addressed as Mere, objects to her grandsons' intention to work for the mining company which operates in the area. The Métis people in Arcand are affected by economic insecurity, a condition not uncommon to Indigenous communities all around North America. The dialogue is revealing for the nature of the conflict. The Beausoliels own a family business in construction work, but Joan's brothers need off-season jobs: "Come November we'll need to look for winter jobs. Maybe I'll go north to the mines [Junior says]. […] Mere dropped her spoon. It rattled against the bowl like a miniature alarm. 'The mines? You gonna work for thieves? That's going from making things all day to taking things all day'" (18). Mere protests Junior's idea of working for the mining company for that would mean cooptation into the orbit of colonialist/ capitalist extractivism that uses Indigenous resources while disregarding traditional ways of relating to the land and Métis land claims. It would be no empowerment either, but rather complicity with the settler system keeping the Indigenous in a state of dependency and, under the guise of providing jobs, reproducing the latter's condition of "precariat" in Nayar's sense of vulnerability turned into helplessness.[7] Her statement "We can't let our young people work for such

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[5] This is in reference to the use of Native imagery in the representation of America during the Revolutionary period. Please see, for example, Arlene Hirschfelder and Paulette F. Molin, "I Is for Ignoble: Stereotyping Native Americans" at https://www.ferris.edu/HTMLS/news/jimcrow/native/homepage.htm)

[6] Leanne Simpson relies on the work of Audra Simpson, who says: "There is and […] will continue to be push back on the settler logics of elimination. Those who still live this struggle with different political authorities find themselves in a 'nested' form of sovereignty and in a politics of refusal" (*Mohawk Interruptus* 11-12).

[7] Nayar builds on Judith Butler's notion of "precarious lives" and defines a "precariat public sphere" (113) as constituted of lives lived under the threat of displacement, exclusion, and even genocide in the wake of "European humanism […] inextricably linked to the colonial project," whose claimed civilizational mission "banish[ed] the colonized subjects to the margins of humanity, […] secondary life forms" (112). As long as "[e]mpowerment is

places. I refuse!" (19) explicitly voices her politics of refusal from a traditional Indigenous perspective. Mere advises resistance through presence on land, to oppose the contemporary iteration of the *vacuum domicillium* doctrine: "Mere was patient. 'The more the people stay off the land, the more vulnerable the land is'" (22). No wonder the conversation veers toward identity—Mere's daughter, Flo, challenges her mother's views by invoking the stereotype of the Indigenous as economically unaccomplished, perpetually marginal:

> 'Great, Mom. Maybe you and the seniors group can come by this winter and help us out with our loan payments and the hydro, eh?' […] 'What are we supposed to do? Stay poor? Would that prove to you that we're Indian enough?'
> 'No, my love.' Mere was serene now that she had successfully made her point. 'We are supposed to stay right with community. That's how we know we're Indian enough.' (20)

This generational clash reveals the "productive capacity" of settler colonialism to divide the Indigenous community by producing hierarchies of Indigeneity which represent assimilation and individualistic success as the right path to follow, at odds with the community-oriented approach seen as backwardedness, with the negative tinge of "savagery" embedded. Florence even questions the honesty of her mother's stance: "'If you're so traditional, why are the seniors meeting at the shrine, anyways? Shouldn't you be in a lodge or something?" (21). Mere's answer points to Métis adaptation as survival without assimilation. Christianity is an integral part of Métis identity, but its faithful exercise does not exclude the awareness of religion being instrumentalized in the process of settler hegemony imposition: "We're Métis, you fool. The church *is* the lodge. And besides, it's better to be close to the enemy than far away. Keep an eye on things. I'm tryna organize the old people to take a stand. We're not letting the community leaders sign no agreements with nobody" (21; emphasis in the original).

Mere's attitude resonates with that of the Elders in the mapping project Simpson tells about; like them, Mere is not "naïve" (Simpson, loc. 246). Along with other seniors, she remains on her guard for new forms of dispossession settler colonialism can devise in its dynamics of strategic readjustment. This conversation in the Beausoliel family is an early warning about how the "politics of recognition" works as a new device for Indigenous land appropriation, like Coulthard discussed it. Mere's undermining of settler memory, her not-forgetting about the conquest, makes her undesirable and she is ruthlessly eliminated.

In this context, Joan's story of tirelessly searching for her husband becomes meaningful in more than one way, through the lens of the Métis tales of the *rogarou*.

Joan "was born in Arcand, like generations before her. Unlike them, she'd lived other places before moving back" (6). She keeps moving through "cities and towns" (7) in a personal journey of unfulfillment, until she meets Victor and returns home with him. For a while Victor is treated as an outsider, and accepted as a family and community member when he proves attachment by marrying Joan and siding with her brothers in a bar fight. Joan and Victor have individual histories of displacement from the community and its traditional stories encapsulating Indigenous ways of relating to land, which makes them susceptible to visitation by the *rogarou*. Joan has a strong attachment to the small plot of land her father took pains to buy. For the Indigenous the "[l]ove of land does not depend on property ownership" (LaRocque, "Place" 183); Percy Beausoliel bought the land for protection—"to keep it out of the hands of dickholes from the city" (70)—another form of adaptation without assimilation, of preserving traditional ways in a new context. Joan has an underlying sense of identity in relation to her plot: "The place reminded her who she was" (71); significantly, it is the land that has personhood-bestowing agency. But Joan's disconnection from

automatically assumed to be empowerment through a certain kind of learning and employment—one determined by capitalist industry […] the newly 'empowered' remain a precariat" (114).

the community's traditions is expressed in her impatience with the old people's habits and conversations. Joan has internalized the colonialist view of Indigenous traditions as irrelevant. In different moments, she is "exasperated by all this Indian shit" and her grandmother's lifetime friend, Ajean, remarks "You're no good at listening" (143, 144). Indeed, she is one who has forgotten the stories, and her journey in search of Victor is also about spiritual readjustment for completion of her homecoming. Victor, for his part, has forgotten attachment to land, although he has roots in the community before he moved "out west" (84), so much so that he suggests selling Joan's inherited plot to a development company for a huge amount of money. This is the moment he disappears without a trace when he goes to check the traplines on the land he proposes selling, to cool off after the fight with his wife. Mere's comment highlights Victor's internalized settler mainstream mindset as a disempowering condition akin to disease: "'Sometimes we forget what's real. For him, he sees a different way of being secure, I suppose. […] It's not bad, just not right'" (84).

When everyone else stops searching for Victor, Joan continues to look for him everywhere. Hers is a journey of desperate love, she drives around the area in a state of annihilation of self, and with bodily functions performed only to live to find Victor: "Fingers exist only to dig, legs to pump you forward on blistered feet. You look. You look. You look. You push granola bars between your teeth to get some fuel into your stomach. So you can keep going" (5). All she can register while driving her car up and down roads is that what she sees is "not Victor" (23). Until one day she happens to enter a revivalist mission's tent set up in the parking lot of a Walmart store. There she finds Victor in the impossible role of a preacher, his memory completely wiped out, and bearing the name of Reverend Eugene Wolff. When Victor doesn't recognize her, the shock and pain overwhelm her and she wakes up in hospital, to soon find out that her Mere had been killed outside her home, allegedly by wolves. But the community men who go hunt them down never find them. Angelique's friend, Ajean, suggests it was likely the *rogarou.*

In an interview with Melissa Michal of *Electric Lit*, Cherie Dimaline recounts having read a magazine article on a flight, about "very heavily financed" missionaries that were coming into Canadian First Nations. Having done consulting work similar to the project Leanne Betasamosake Simpson was involved in, collecting Indigenous communities' "concerns as stories" about TransCanada company's plans to build a pipeline through Indigenous lands, she realized that communities exposed to intense missionary activity were more open to development projects being established on their lands; Dimaline sees missionary work as closely connected to development/ extractive industries' interests, two facets of the same colonialist drive:

> And one of the main messages [was] that people were experiencing poverty, abuse, racism, not because of colonization, but because they had been worshipping false gods and spirits, so this was their punishment. The way forward was to come in and leave their paganism behind. So no more ceremony. Go to the grocery stores. […]
> So therefore, I'm sitting there with this article […]. This is about horrible missionaries. […] Who would do this? They're fronted by these Indigenous preachers. […] And then I remembered the TLU [Traditional Land Use]. If you could get people off the land, it's easier to exploit the land. (Dimaline, interview with Melissa Michal)

Dimaline's answer to the question "Who would do this?" is *Empire of Wild* as a *rogarou* story. Joan realizes there is a connection between the missionaries and the development company which had proposed buying her land when she learns that Reverend Wolff's security chief, a Mr. Thomas Heiser, is also the CEO of Resource Development Specialists. The conflict between Joan and Heiser, who keeps Victor in his power, mirrors the tension between the capitalized/ non-capitalized M(m)étis, along the lines of culturally-specific meanings of the *rogarou*.

Ignoring Catholic religious customs exposes one to the risk of an encounter with the *rogarou* and transformation into a monster as punishment, but, reflecting Métis cultural hybridity, Ajean explains there are "lots of ways to become one. […] Being attacked by a rogarou, mistreating women, betraying your people… that's the ones we know around here, anyways" (69). Ajean identifies Mere's murderer as a wolf "of sorts" (68) and, on learning the details of Joan's initial visit to the mission tent, leads her to conclude that Heiser is a *rogarou*. The "naming [of] the beast" (64), which bears the Christian connotation of the devil's presence, has the role and power of a correct diagnosis to effect recovery from a disease, and Ajean suggests the necessary treatment: "Go get your man from that wolf" (70), which implies the need for agency to achieve healing, survival of the community as Métis subjects.

A son of immigrants, with no meaningful connection to the land of the kind Indigenous people cherish, Thomas Heiser has built his career on principles of "pack dynamics" (45), which he prefers to call leadership—"He'd been a leader his entire life […]" (46)—that is, staying the alpha male by any means, including deception and murder. From his father, who had the ambition to build indigeneity for his son in their new country by having him play baseball "like all boys in North America," young Thomas learned that the Heisers had a history of dealing with dogs "and before them, wolves" (47). As a boy, dogs loved and obeyed him. "Eventually, he used his ability to dominate creatures in order to grow a successful consulting company" (48). Heiser's career evolves according to an immigrant's dream of success in the New World, from a "dog walker" to a "low-level adviser for the federal government […] as part of the legal team sent out to assess treaty adhesion claims" (176). In the latter capacity, he gets to learn about Métis *rogarou* stories and devises a plan to use them in his own interest. A successful businessman now, representing the interests of a big development company which plans to extend a natural gas pipeline, Heiser is involved in "navigating Indigenous relations in the energy sector" (175). He admits to his deceptive practices when he calls himself "a Wolfsegner," from Bavarian ancestors "carriers of wolfssegen" (277) [8]—the power to charm wolves into acting according to their will—"A useless power, I thought, until I discovered the rogarou" (278), he tells Joan.

Carolyn Podruchny analyzes the *rogarou* as "a form of [cultural] métissage," whereby French *voyageurs* to the New World developed an oral tradition which "came to reflect a distinct French Canadian identity" (2). The cultural background they carried, where lycanthropy involved some kind of transgression, allowed the newcomers to understand Indigenous stories of *windigos*—"Algonquian monsters who ate human flesh and had hearts of ice" (1)—through the lens of their own tales of the *loup-garou*. While Podruchny identifies differences between *windigos* and werewolves, she notes both figures are "a way to scare adults into […] following social rules to ensure their safety"; both "contained the themes of transformation, magic and cannibalism" (10). Away from their familiar social environments, experiencing hunger and fear in the encounters with Natives as "a central condition of [their] lives," the *voyageurs*' "anxiety" translated in stories of losing their humanity and transforming into beasts (22). In light of "cannibalistic images woven into the descriptions of the Americas by travel writers such as Christopher Columbus" (6), which had justified conquest, dispossession, enslavement of Indigenous people, and physical and cultural genocide in the name of a just war to subdue and improve the "savage," "European[s] […] were clearly influenced by concepts of savagism and wildness among people they

[8] Medieval German folktales speak of Wolfsegners (wolf charmers), people who performed *wolfssegen* (incantations) to protect cattle from attacks by wolves. Wolfsegners started to be accused of witchery when their abilities, initially perceived as positive, came to be seen as deceptive—they were thought to make money from casting spells to cause wolves to attack, only to then request payment for charming them away. A Thomas Heiser is known to have been tried for witchery in the 1650s ("Wolfssegen," Wikipedia, Wikimedia Foundation—https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wolfssegen, latest modification December 19, 2020).

perceived to be primitive. Cannibalism and western imperialism have been inextricably linked […], as cannibalism became a defining characteristic of supposedly uncivilized non-Europeans" (Podruchny 10).

Heiser's treatment of Indigenous people mirrors this construction of the *rogarou* from the settler's perspective. He revives the colonialist myth of Indigenous primitivism, expressed in stories of irrational transformations and in Indigenous people's way of connecting to land reflected in their land use practices, both in need to be dislodged through Christian missionary work and improved through resource extraction. He references "Indian savagery" in his comment after his initial encounter with Joan, whose inarticulateness due to drinking with her distressed cousin and to Victor not recognizing her places her in a position of disempowerment: "Way to live a stereotype, lady" (46). His remark to one of the mission members, concerned about the fuss Joan creates demanding her husband back, has a genocidal echo: "We'll be fine. The cavalry is en route […]" (33)—coming to deal with the "hostile Indian." He calls the police and the ambulance in tandem, which points to criminalizing and medicalizing Indigenous demands, the denial of their legitimacy extending to include their land claims.

Heiser's attitude reflects the shift Amy Ransom identifies in her discussion of nineteenth-century literary Gothic in Québec, which reinterpreted French-Canadian oral tradition to serve the nascent nation's "ideological aims" (251). The "*loup-garou* […] engaged central questions of civility versus barbarism, as well as sexuality and gender relations" in the context of "colonizing a new world, including interacting with what Old World discourses termed 'savage' peoples and their lore […]" (251). The monstrosity of the *loup-garou* resides in the transformation of the human into a beast and in the latter's hybridity (métissage), an expression of contagion with the uncivilized and impure. At the same time, the *loup-garou* tradition provided a sense of indigeneity to settlers, "offer[ing] the sign of an American specificity for French Canadians as opposed to the French in Europe"; also, the literary Gothic stories referencing old *loup-garou* tales implicitly "connote a contemporary state of civilization" of the settler nation having evolved and integrated wildness as a trace of the past (Ransom 269). It doesn't matter that Heiser is not originally French. His actions align him with the settler colonialist system constructing Indigenous inferiority to serve as a reason for improvement *qua* dispossession. His association with the missionaries and the governmentally sanctioned development projects suggests that Heiser is not just one dishonest businessman. He stands for settler colonialism as a structure in a process of readjustment through old means adapted to new contexts: "Colonizers wanted the land […] Everything else, whether it is legal or policy or economic or social […] was part of a machinery that was designed to create a perfect crime—a crime where the victims are unable to see or name the crime *as a crime*" (Simpson loc. 289; author's emphasis).

Colonial(ist) domination involves deception and secrecy about it. Heiser conceals his appropriative intentions with regard to Indigenous lands behind a carefully crafted public display of honest commitment to compliance with the law. Since the contemporary legal context of First Nations land rights recognition requires negotiations with communities, Heiser offers "posed handshakes with men in headdresses […] dummy copies of agreements to pretend sign for the press as the real deals were being sweated out between lawyers in the backrooms" (45). Heiser's association with the missionaries has nothing to do with faith, it is simply a replay of the colonialist politics of "Westernized religious organization" (Dimaline, interview with Michal) turning Christianity into a means of Indigenous dispossession. The leaflets of The Ministry of the New Redemption, which Heiser controls, carry "pictures of people who looked like they came from a stock photo search for 'Indians: smiling, laughing'" (116). In line with Judith Butler's commentary on precarious life, the sanitized, happy image of the Indigenous separated from their indigeneity occupies the visual field, hegemonizing representation.

Victor's amnesia about his identity is suggested to be "only monitors and morphine" (131), the result of Heiser's criminal intervention. In light of Garnet Butchart's interpretation of "uttering a forged

instrument" (1),[9] which is a crime for intentionally communicating a forged document as real, I see Heiser's deceptive use of Victor's preacher persona as an act of miscommunication; it harms the Indigenous community, as well as the sense of *communitas* an honest communication creates, through what Coulthard called a "hegemonization" of Indigenous rights recognition:

> He'd vastly improved his odds by bringing the word of Jesus into the territories he had to sway toward resource projects. Once God was in there, especially as portrayed by the beautiful Reverend Wolff—one of their own—people were less worried about protecting their traditional lands. […] Wolff was gold and Heiser would not lose him. (175)

Heiser intentionally exploits the colonialist hierarchization of the converted (assimilated) Native over the traditionalist one in conjunction with the discourse of racial purity, according to which the possibility of beastly transformation remains a threat of relapsing into the savagery lodged within the "civilized" self. The *loup-garou* translates the "fear of giving into irrationality […] a fear of an unstable humanity […] subject to fluctuations" manifested in relation to métissage.[10] The *rogarou*, as the "composite human-animal figure" in the settlers' stories of the *loup-garou*, is "implicitly about race" in its sense of the monstrous Other—"that which Euro-Canadians (and 'Americans') must suppress if they are to continue their imperialistic domination" (Cariou, "Dances" 160). The "Métis [Heiser says] never used to be an issue. No one used to give a shit about the halfbreeds in the deals" (46). Given their entitlement to participate in discussions under the new politics of recognition due to Métis legal struggle, Heiser resorts to the (fake) protection of Christianity, concealing his views of racial inferiority. Victor is a (useful/ usable) Métis, so Heiser represents him as a man "trying to run from some pretty dark stuff" (170), that is, his association with Joan. "He knows that she is his weakness," Heiser says, implying the danger of Victor relapsing into wildness, to convince the mission members to keep Joan away from Reverend Wolff (172). Joan, a Métis and a woman, is represented as essentially savage and an embodiment of temptation into sin. "It is no coincidence that so many stories of lycanthropy are highly sexualized: the erotic depravity of the lycanthrope is represented as the possibility of miscegenation or bestiality […]" (Cariou, "Dances" 160). When Heiser, after cutting the battery connection on Joan's car to prevent her from following the missionaries and interfering with his business interests, leaves her the message "Joan, go home" (129), he actually means keeping both the Indigenous and the woman "in their place" (LaRocque, "Place" 185) dictated by colonialism and heteropatriarchy.

The *rogarou* is not one character. While Heiser has a wolfish appearance, with "the gold hue of his eyes" and a smile "with so much sharp in it" (32), the novel suggests that settler colonialism as a system bears the features of the cannibal beast. Thus, like Cherie Dimaline stated in her interview with Melissa Michal, the *rogarou* is as "real" as it is "metaphorical." Jack Forbes speaks of the "*wétiko* cannibal psychosis" (9),[11] a mental illness consisting of an exacerbated selfishness; colonialism/ imperialism and heteropatriarchy are forms of "the *wétiko* disease [as] the sickness of exploitation" (loc. 168) for (more

[9] Butchart writes that "a forged document is transformed into an instrument of crime the moment at which it is presented, instituted by an act of giving or sharing—an act of communication"; the crime consists of "put[ting] the possibility of commonality and, above all else, community at risk" (1, 2).

[10] Cariou reads the execution of Louis Riel in light of "this rhetoric of purity and the pathologization of hybridity." The prosecutor's statement—"In the *changing light* of his *dark* Indian eye we see the civilized man struggling with the Indian"—leads Cariou to conclude that "the instability of Riel's racial identity [his Métis-ness] is what the prosecutor identifies as the most dangerous thing about him" ("Dances" 160, 161; emphasis in the original).

[11] *Wétiko* is in Cree, and *windigo* in Ojibwe; both are Indigenous nations involved in Métis ethnogenesis, through interaction with French *voyageurs*.

than) metaphorically devouring Indigenous people, women, and the environment through appropriation and control that harm the *communitas* of creation by disrespecting its parts, human and non-human. Heiser and, by implication, the establishment he represents, use stories of the *rogarou* as an expression of Métis and other First Nations "savagery," which must be displaced through missionary work, to pave the way for the communities to willingly open their lands to development, convinced that it is for their own benefit. This reflects what Mary Louise Pratt called "anti-conquest" (8-9)—the discourse through which colonialism justified its genocidal intervention as a civilizing mission and thus performed its disavowal of the violence against Indigenous peoples.

"In Métis stories, the rigoureau [*rogarou*] is often a heroic figure, or, if it is a villain, this villainy is positioned in such a way that it might still be seen as heroic" (Cariou, "Dances" 161). "I realized [Dimaline tells Michal] how […] he really is this character who does this great and horrible work of showing you what can go wrong." Its difference from the settler-constructed *rogarou* reflects the "big M" Métis subject position.

Joan refuses to "go home" obedient and voiceless as told, and assumes restorative agency in following the "traveling Jesus show" (185), as Ajean calls the mission, a formulation suggesting the Wild West Show and its conquest-as-entertainment message. She starts out distressed and lonely; in Victor's absence, she is drained of vital substance "like a balloon with a leak" (62) and "wandering the township like a broken-hearted ghost" (11). Her ghostly existence because of her loss of Victor also signifies political inexistence due to her yet incomplete return home. She needs to reattach to the community as well as to place in a meaningful way, which is what William Bevis, discussing novels of the first wave of Native American Renaissance, called "homing-in" (580). After the death of Mere, who "smelled like Chantilly perfume and *safety*" (74; my emphasis), Joan is completely disoriented: "Even as they passed into territory as familiar as their pulse, Joan wasn't sure where she was" (41). It's not only the pain of having lost her beloved husband and grandmother; it's also the effect of her disconnection from the community through forgetting or distrusting its stories.

Interestingly, the novel displays a correspondence between Joan and Victor's experience of their scary and painful separate solitudes and their remembering (and reliving) the traditional stories of the *rogarou*. Joan's purpose is to "get [Victor] to unforget" (95). But for that she needs to restore her own memory of her community's tradition. She suggests Victor is "brainwashed" (37) when he doesn't recognize her, unaware yet that she means "settler memory" fed into him. Victor's ordeal happens "in a twenty-six-acre cell" (42)—the exact size of Joan's plot of land he proposes selling. There he experiences disorientation, not knowing east from west, unable to find the way home. He feels divested of himself, "like his throat was full of someone else's breath" (43), a prey. As he hallucinates in "the darkening emptiness around him" (199), he has flashbacks to childhood, when his role models were traditional people. He remembers himself fitting his steps into his uncle's tracks in the snow and his *moshom*'s [grandfather in Ojibwe] teachings of how to survive an encounter with wild animals when hunting. Victor reaches a new "age of reason" (233), that is, of understanding, through remembering the traditional education he had received as a child and by investing himself in the land through his suffering. Remembering the stories, he gets to see Heiser as the *rogarou*; soon he learns that he is going to be consumed in a "ceremony of devour" (256). Victor's initial intention, the thought of selling the land, displaces him—"You are wherever the betrayal happened" (257), Heiser/ the *rogarou* tells him, having announced that "I'm going to wear you" (223), like a coat, in a gesture of indigenizing the settler by substituting the Indigenous through consuming his indigeneity.

Old woman Ajean guides Joan along her journey of rescuing Victor, which coincides with relearning her attachment to community through stories as a "homing-in" process. She advises that Joan must regain her husband by making him remember their shared love and passion with her own body. Like Francisco in

Momaday's *House Made of Dawn* and Betonie in Silko's *Ceremony*, iconic writers and books of the Native American Renaissance, Ajean has a tricksterism that ensures her physical and cultural survival as a Métis—her recipe is combining her sincere Catholic faith and Indigenous ways, prayers to Jesus and Virgin Mary and traditional medicine to keep the *rogarou* at bay.

Joan remembers *rogarou* stories from her childhood, and that makes her sensitive to Ajean's advice, who substitutes the late Mere as a figure of cultural authority, from a generation that has not lost connection with Métis memory. But it takes a personal journey of reinvesting herself within the land for Joan to fully come home as opposed to "go[ing] home" like Heiser orders her out of the way.

After Mere's violent death, Joan thoroughly washes her blood from the stones the old woman had "picked and placed […] herself" and called "grandfather rocks" (53). Joan's way of mourning for her grandmother deletes the erasure of the Indigenous person sacrificially killed to make room for settler presence and interests, as she and her nephew, Zeus, "even peeled swatches of red-splashed bark from the shaken birch trees, revealing underneath the resilient glow of something new" (63).

The symbolism of grandfather rocks is shared and emphasized by the salt bones, an outgrowth of bone tissue Mere's body had mysteriously produced, and which she and Ajean had stored as medicine to use in times of crisis. Ajean teaches Joan to carry the bone salt grated from it for protection against the *rogarou*. Dimaline turns again to the techniques of Indigenous oral literature and challengingly uses "the 'willing suspension of disbelief'" (Wiget 6) to undermine the Euro-American representational paradigm, reclaiming Métis intellectual sovereignty. "If Metis people say a thing is possible, who gets to determine that that thing is fictional?" Chelsea Vowel asks in her latest volume of stories (*Buffalo* 13). The fantastic episode of the salt bones matters with regard to the "critical judgment about the likelihood of such an event's ever happening in view of culturally shared assumptions about the structure of reality" (Wiget 6). Mere's bones are "sovereign bones," to use a notion by Eric Gansworth: "Even as flesh fails, we understand that the parts of us we leave behind are the support structures. Those elements of our beings, stolen for so many generations, like voices, ideas, cosmologies, come back to us—those sovereign bones" (Gansworth, qtd. in Coupal et al., "Sovereign" viii). In the final confrontation with Heiser, Joan guards herself and her husband as a couple—a form and expression of *communitas*—using the bone salt Ajean provides. The bones, which connect her back to the Red River Métis resistance, suggest that "landedness"—Emma LaRocque's concept—is always lived in body, and that Indigenous resurgence is to be built, like Leanne Betasamosake Simpson wrote, around "the maps […] Elders carried in their bodies" (loc. 304).

Conclusions

Chelsea Vowel writes about her own stories that "[w]orking from Metis otipêymisow-itâpisiniwin [Métis worldview], transformation and shape-shifting are a real and a constant potential in everything" (*Buffalo* 77). According to Cariou, in Indigenous traditions, shape-shifting, transformation, "the instability of hybrid identity" connote "strength: […] the power of bodily self-determination" ("Dances" 161). In *Empire of Wild*, Joan travels the land of her ancestors, investing herself into it through bodily connection in movement. While she is a modern woman, who drives a car and uses Facebook to locate the missionaries, a far cry from the Indigenous person stuck in the timeless past of stereotypical representation, Joan becomes traditional through reattachment to land, her journey a reenactment of the Métis resistance and reemergence, a trajectory of resubjectification. Joan refuses to remain ghostly, exiled in the marginality where "settler memory" seeks to emplace her for her double otherness as the "savage" woman. While attending one of Reverend Wolff's preaching sessions, she smiles at Heiser and looks straight into his eyes, returning his "imperial gaze" in confrontation: "if he was so attuned to her, she must

be a threat. […] She couldn't be ignored. She had to be feared. […] And then she mouthed the words *I know*" (122). Her talking back at Heiser signals her regaining voice and agency from a Métis subject position. Joan gets to see validity and value in the stories of her community. As she comes to understand Heiser's role in the assemblage of settler colonialism he represents, the *rogarou* becomes a figure of Métis sovereignty, the discourse of cannibalism turned on its head.

"I desperately, desperately wanted to write an Indigenous woman as a hero. […] Indigenous women carry so much weight. And the heaviest weight we carry is love. […] We keep choosing motherhood. We keep choosing community," Dimaline says in her interview with Melissa Michal. Joan restores the Métis onto their homeland, in symbolic and material terms, through saving Victor and coming home. She also re-stories Métis land through becoming story. Her reconnection with the traditions of her community and her acting in line with it are part of the same process. Joan reclaims the Indigenous woman's self-determination in sexual terms, by offering her body to Victor as a way to help him regain his Métis-ness and shed the discourse of savagery. She is also the only adult her nephew, Zeus, trusts. A teenager with a troubled relationship with his mother and an absent father, Zeus sees Joan as his "soulmate" (59) and accompanies her on the road. It is him who makes Joan understand the responsibility of motherhood to "conjure worlds from blood memory and then hand it all to your children" (53). As the novel ends with Zeus lost in the woods, he probably has to encounter the *rogarou* and learn to find a healthy way to handle his relationship with his mother after throwing destructive words in her face; he may find inspiration for survival in Joan's story. Joan is, in Paula Gunn Allen's words, the Indigenous woman as "creatrix," the "shaper of existence" (47), who creates worlds and maintains communities by bearing the stories forward.

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A Rupturing of Typecasts through Villoro's Cynicism and Urrea's Heroines

Abstract: This article examines two short stories from the compilation *Los culpables (The Guilty)* (2015), by Juan Villoro and the novel *Into the Beautiful North* (2009), by Luis Alberto Urrea to demonstrate a reworking of fossilized notions of identity and gender to produce narratives that counter stagnated literary archetypes and promulgate a re-writing of self. An exploration of psychological and emotive aspects of the U.S.-Mexican border as a territorial and ideological space for masculinity, femininity, age, and national-international movement is informed primarily by border and migration studies discourses related to multi-spatiality, the historical instability of tropes, and how such instability is advancing stereotype-challenging narratives. Such a lens is woven through the discussion of each work presented here. Beginning with the short story "Mariachi," readers will be acquainted with two characters in particular, Julián and Brenda, to focus on themes of identity, loyalty, and gender. Next, the discussion turns towards "Amigos Mexicanos," where elements of the archetypes of the "ugly American" and U.S. fixations with violence in Mexico are considered against notions of authenticity by examining the characters of Katzenberg and the narrator. Finally, Urrea's novel *Into the Beautiful North* illustrates the crafting of a cohort of multi-generational characters that push issues of identity, gender, and belonging into more progressive spheres.

Keywords: Villoro, Alberto Urrea, US-Mexican Border, Latina/o Literature, Femininity, Heroism, National Identity

Introduction

The short story compilation *Los culpables* by Juan Villoro and *Into the Beautiful North* by Luis Alberto Urrea present nuanced transnational amalgamations through their characters' storylines and personal and interpersonal development. Using cynicism in one (Villoro) and female-centric heroism in the other (Urrea), the figures of the U.S.-Mexican border and all its associated social, cultural, and political ramifications move over-played stereotypes to be considered as representative of re-negotiated internal socio-cultural contradictions, and a space where identity and gender are re-worked away from antiquated literary tropes.

Viewing the border region through such a trope-challenging lens aligns with perspectives about the psychological and emotive aspects of the U.S.-Mexican border space as proposed by Adalberto Aguirre Jr. and Jennifer K. Simmers. They suggest that beyond a mere geographical separation of territory, an appreciation of the social and cultural dimensions of the area is necessary to grasp the synergism that fuels "the border" and "its people" with a mobile consciousness and, as a byproduct, a palpable vulnerability (99-100). Núria Vilanova agrees, perceiving the border as a "multi-spatial" area that encompasses "social, cultural, linguistic and artistic features" that stretch well beyond economics, geopolitics, and actual physical space (73). Interestingly, she notes how when examining works such as these, one's positionality cannot be ignored since within one sphere, academic discourse can be laden with internalizations of "language, aesthetics, perspective" and ideology to "conceptualize the border… in a globalizing and fragmented world," while in the other, the border "is mainly referential" with characters and settings that are "*about*, yet [do] not stem *from*, the border" (emphasis original) (76-77, 79). One lens views the border as "symbolic" or merely referential while for the other, "it affects their

entire lives" (77). The works here consider both ends of this spectrum with these particular arguments by Aguirre Jr., Simmers, and Núria Vilanova in mind.

Despite such differences in lens, whether one is at some distance from the border or not, both can succeed in the toppling of trope-laden and stereotypical representations of self, national and global identity, and gender. While N. Finnegan delves into cinematic representations of formulaic and problematically simplistic and dichotomous "Mexicanness" in films such as *Like Water for Chocolate* (a different medium than is of interest here), his point that an audience's "stereotype reception" has crucial implications for the successful dismantling of tropes, particularly those related to identity and gender, is palpable in *Los culpables* and *Into the Beautiful North* (317). Finnegan, borrowing from Stam and Shohat, explains how the "cultural significance of certain stereotypes may undergo a metamorphosis," a process which overturns images, language, etc. that were once tolerated to become utterly rejected, "emphasis[ing] the historical instability of stereotypes" (317). This became a fundamental point for the analysis of the works presented here; such a metamorphosis is the tension point in each plot and for the main characters' development.

In Villoro's short story "Mariachi," the stuckedness of stereotypes related to *machismo* (sexism) and virility is questioned through the lead male character's (Julián) identity crisis and the female lead's (Brenda) role in its resolution. Julián is a famous and much-adored *mariachi* singer who is plagued by what he perceives to be an unfulfilling joke of a career and a history of toxic romantic liaisons. Villoro's second short story, "Amigos Mexicanos," contests several problematic racial, misogynistic, and culturally reductive stereotypes that Mexico's northern neighbor, the U.S., is perceived to have long held towards the nation and its people, all but demanding an evolution away from that maddening rhetorical culture. It is the story of a bungling American journalist who is authoring a magazine article about Mexico. In search of authenticity and street-credibility, he seeks the assistance of a local source that turns out to be deeply disillusioned and takes these feelings out, in part, on the journalist. And Urrea's novel, *Into the Beautiful North,* divided into two parts, "Sur" (South) and "Norte" (North), tells the story of a rural, forgotten, but beautiful small town in Mexico that is deeply struggling due to having lost so many townsfolk (particularly men) to the lure of opportunities in the U.S. A group of young friends become inspired to journey northward, trekking through the whole of Mexico and into the U.S., in search of their long-lost neighbors in order to bring them back and reinvigorate their home. The novel delves into possible *frontera* futures when the notion of metamorphosizing is turned towards advancing generational dynamics and gender empowerment. When the instability described by Finnegan reaches a particular socio-cultural temperature and is then focused with sufficient collective interest and pressure (nowadays intensified by the expansiveness and pervasiveness of the Internet and the rapidity of social media sharing and commentary), a rupturing of tropes may occur, freeing up social and cultural spaces to be filled with agency-holding representations such as those put forth by Villoro and Urrea.

Their characters exhibit this sense of fed-upness that permeates each of their story arcs as they confront fossilized depictions of identity and gender. Both authors challenge patriarchal archetypes that long dominated as national symbols within Mexican, Mexican American, and U.S./American cultural narratives. Yet, both also advance the narratives of contestation and reinvention with characters whose unavoidable trans-nationality induces (and in some cases, forces) a re-emergence of oneself as a more fully realized and confident representative of an archetype turned on its head.

"Mariachi"

While the short story "Mariachi" in Villoro's compilation *Los culpables* is ripe with a sardonic set of characters, the principal male and female leads, Julián and Brenda, are of particular interest. Villoro charges them with toppling gendered archetypes by shifting their gaze and experiences away from

traditional male-as-macho and female-as-docile roles. "Mariachi" embarks on a derisive narrative from the start. The reader is introduced to the main character, Julián, as "the only mariachi star who has never in his life mounted a horse" (6), a mariachi who possesses "the face like an abandoned ranchero, and the eyes of a brave man who knows how to cry" (9) and whose "worst album… had gone platinum" (12), but owes his fame only to the, seemingly contemptible, fact of being "from here" (Mexico), an identity marker that he struggles with (9). As a mariachi, Julián is a hyper-culturalized symbol, one that is limited to one stereotypical role of hyper virility and masculinity with no assets to leverage to evolve (or escape). This generates a resentment that becomes obvious to the reader when he responds to the question, "Are you Mexican?" with the declaration, "Yes, but next time I won't be" (9).

Since Julián contends so strongly with the implications of occupying the role that he does, it is worthwhile to consider how the mariachi has endured as a leading national symbol in Mexican cultural production since at least the nineteenth century (Mulholland, "Beautiful Thing"). It was during the strife-filled nineteenth century that *rurales*, skilled horsemen recruited to serve as law enforcement, began to dress as *charros* (the garb visually associated with the mariachi). This image was bolstered during the Porfiriato[12] as being representative of "invincible national heroes" and became engrained into a collective psyche of what constituted "manhood, [virility], nationhood, and power" (Nájera-Ramírez 4). As the twentieth century began and the revolution gained speed, politicians exploited the *charro* image while writers romanticized it, creating a perfect convergence within cultural production and consumption for the *charro* (mariachi) to illustrate exactly "the kind of imagined community that [was] the nation" (Nájera-Ramírez 4). Such visual and rhetorical propagandizing reached new heights in the years after the revolution, as the *charro* became a staple of efforts to foster "a sense of national unity and domestic ideals" and generally all that was pridefully embraced as uniquely "*lo mexicano"* (Mexicanness) (Nájera-Ramírez 5). It is within such a context that Julián experiences psychological distress because of his profession and considers the role as an overwhelming burden. Julián physically rejects the weight to exist as a mariachi when he uses a riding crop on stage to "whack away the flowers they [the adoring fans] throw" (Villoro 11). It is an action that the fans interpret as heightening the macho mariachi role, yet in actuality is a desperate attempt to beat down, or hold at bay, the idolization that has become so repulsive for Julián to endure. Such physical rejection is again evident when he dreams of "driving a Ferrari, running over sombreros until they were nice and flat" and of "float[ing] in the stratosphere, look[ing] down at Earth and see[ing] a blue bubble without a single sombrero" (Villoro 12).

As a counterpoint to Julián's brooding disposition and identity crisis, Brenda appears to represent the personal and professional ideal that Julián cannot initially obtain (in his self and in a partner, mature, and self-aware) or achieve (in his career, obscurity and autonomy). She had moved to Spain, even going so far as "defin[ing] herself as a fugitive from mariachis" (12), describing how she left the confines of a Mexico that she "hated" behind,[13] yet becomes involved with Julián despite his stature as the preeminent mariachi. She first perceives him as merely a product to manipulate, though later comes to see him as a person she must help to realize his true self. With the mariachi tradition being so central to the storyline, it is intriguing to note how *mariachera*, all female mariachi groups, have emerged and in some cases exceeded their male counterparts in popularity and marketability within late twentieth and early twenty-first century iterations of mariachi. Mary-Lee Mulholland is one of the few scholars researching questions of femininity as related to mariachi/mariachera. She makes compelling points as to how and why

[12] The period of Porfirio Diaz's presidency of Mexico (1876-1880; 1884-1911)—dictatorial rule

[13] The reasons why Brenda so vehemently left Guadalajara are not revealed to the reader by her or Julián, who explains that he "promised not to tell anyone. I can only say that she lived to escape that story" (20).

mariacheras are re-fashioning the "unequal power relations" of old in Mexico as pertinent to notions of race, gender, and nationhood (Mulholland, "A Beautiful Thing…" 359).

Power relations are of particular interest to home in on since the dynamic between Julián and Brenda is inverted from outmoded models of male-figure being dominant and governing and female-figure being docile and obedient. Julián is the more emotional, moody, unstable, and unpredictable one while Brenda is the self-assured constant. This role reversal breaks from antiquated gendered societal expectations (or rather, stereotypes), particularly in how Brenda, and Brenda alone, is able to counsel Julián. In this way, Brenda's character embodies how women "slip into the in-between spaces of normative identity constructs, sometimes overtly, but most often subtly, to challenge and undermine… categories of gender and sexuality" (Mulholland 360). Brenda seems to be the only character to whom Julián can expressly tell that he does not want to be a mariachi. This suggests that she, the "mariachi fugitive," understands Julián in a way that other characters cannot or will not. Each time Brenda appears in the story, she breaks the mold of docility and submissiveness suggested by antiquated tropes that a woman's role is primarily to be protected and/or to remain within domestic spheres. Precisely because she is inquisitive, persuasive, and worldly, Brenda can engage with Julián on a relationship plane that no other character is able to. While it might seem that Julián is the main character of the short story, it is Brenda. She decenters the masculine and is neither a "harlot" Malinche nor a "chaste" María, successfully shaking off their historical hold as the primary options for female characters to be, by negotiating different signifying systems and still being able to perceive situations and surroundings between multiple cultural paradigms (Mexican, European, masculine, feminine, sexual, independent) (Wyatt 245). Additionally, Brenda is the only character who uses Julián's name; it is not until she speaks it that the reader becomes acquainted with him in this more personalized way, even though the story is narrated by him in first person, as though she, and she alone, is charged with re-introducing him.

"Amigos Mexicanos"

The second short story of interest from Villoro's *Los culpables* compilation, "Amigos Mexicanos," is brimming with examples of a contrasted twenty-first century Mexican persona represented by the narrator, and the archetypical gringo (U.S./American), embodied by the character Samuel Katzenberg. As the story begins, the reader learns that Katzenberg has come to Mexico "to do a story on violence" (Villoro 89), relayed to the reader in a manner that suggests the narrator's deep exasperation about this near exclusive interest in writing about and reporting on Mexico's violence by U.S./American outlets that exists in today's media. Katzenberg embodies the prototype *gringo* outsider who harps with a perverse obsession on notions of Mexican and/or *narco* (drug and cartel centric) crime. The narrator groups Katzenberg into a cohort of individuals such as (Jack) Kerouac and (Allen) Ginsberg, who were "big-time addict[ed]" to Mexico as they perceived it, but "scared [they'd] get jumped" (Villoro 97). To them, the country, its people, their habits, and the culture, are built up in their imaginations to be erringly titillating, yet, nevertheless, overly unrestrained for their comfort. It becomes increasingly difficult for the narrator to work within the illusory parameters of Katzenberg's Mexico, evident when he comments that identifying new, attractive, violent settings would no longer be easy since "all the spots [he'd] been mugged are too ordinary" (98). This becomes an obvious point of contention for the narrator: "I silently cursed Katzenberg, incapable of appreciating the richness of Mexican kitsch. He only paid to see violence" (101), a perceived lawlessness that in many cases was exaggerated, staged, and derisive.

The narrator's exasperation is tinged with mockery from the outset. He comments on Katzenberg's indefatigable tendency to sprinkle his conversations with the Spanish words he knew, as when describing his new position at a magazine as a *quemarropa* (straight-shooter) and his new boss as a "very cool *mujer* (woman), a one-woman *fiesta* (party)" (Villoro 89-90). Katzenberg further commits the faux pas of

establishing himself as an über-*gringo* by embodying several unforgivable U.S./American stereotypes: he is often pedantic in his explanations, as is evidenced in how "…he explained to me the importance of the 'wound as a transsexual construct'… 'very postmodern, beyond gender'" (90). He is repeatedly obtuse as is demonstrated by his observation that "Mexico is magical, but confusing," and a subsequent request that the narrator help him "…figure out which parts are horrible and which parts are Buñuel-esque" (90). The traits with which the narrator contends the most are the exploitative qualities of Katzenberg's project objectives, which he complains about by sarcastically explaining that "[Katzenberg] hired me to be his contact with the genuine. But it was hard for me to satisfy his appetite for authenticity" (90). The narrator further delves into this latter point of how Katzenberg is blind to the realities of the cultural world he is immersing into (albeit sterilely):

> He wanted a reality that was like Frida's paintings, ghastly but unique. Katzenberg didn't understand that her famous traditional dresses were now only to be found on the second floor of the Museo de Antropología [Museum of Anthropology] or worn on godforsaken ranches where they were never luxurious or finely embroidered. He also didn't understand that today's Mexican woman takes pains to wax the honest mustache… (91)

Katzenberg creates a "hyper-Mexican" experience in his mind of what the culture and people "are"; anything else (i.e., reality) is unacceptable. The disdain that this cultivates in the narrator is apparent when he attempts to introduce Katzenberg to an actual expert of Mexican art, the character Didier Morand from Senegal. Much to the narrator's exasperation, he refuses to meet with him since, in the words of Katzenberg, he "didn't need an African source" (Villoro 92). This is an ironic assertion considering how he presents himself as a foreign expert on Mexico, but is deeply offended, even resentful, of the suggestion to consult with *another* foreigner. Indeed, for Katzenberg, not only would such an interaction lack the particular brand of authenticity he was scouting, but it was also deeply perturbing (bordering on a threat) that the expert could possibly "honor so many cultures at once" (92), or that an individual could exist who harbors more (actually authentic) knowledge than himself.

Katzenberg is Villoro's instrument to illustrate habits and tendencies of the "ugly American" that are bothersome and exasperating in their persistence and prolongation. Katzenberg is what Stam and Spence would describe as an "armchair conquistador, affirming our [U.S./American] sense of power while making the inhabitants of the Third World objects of spectacle for the First World's voyeuristic gaze" (4). Katzenberg's character and the dynamic between him and the narrator illustrate a literary contestation of the journalists, authors, filmmakers, and other creators who focus so heavily on violence, poverty, and subordination and who frame south-of-the-border neighbors in historically overwhelmingly condescending terms. Rosa Linda Fregoso, in her text *MeXicana Encounters: The Making of Social Identities on the Borderlands* presents evidence as to how such writers consistently and inappropriately cross the line from "information" to "titillation" and "fetish," relying on the warping of images to become better suited to the U.S./American audience for consumption (13-14). Fregoso aligns with the sentiments of embitterment that are expressed by the narrator and his desires for "alternatives to the 'dirty Mexican,' the 'degenerate and menacing Mexican bandido' that has terrorized the cultural imaginary of the West" (31). Perhaps, then, the narrator's function is to offer what Fregoso terms the "greatest opposition to the colonialist project" (31) by refusing to filter his own self-image through the customary "white, benevolent, patriarchal gaze" (49). He instead heavily relies on mockery and pranks that exploit Katzenberg's foreignness and naivety much to his own (initial) enjoyment.

Katzenberg could be also illustrative of another abrasive über gringo behavioral pattern that grates on the narrator: the carnivalization of "lo Latino" as carried out by real-life author Ilan Stavans in *Latino USA: A Cartoon History.* There are certain editorial decisions carried out by Stavans that, when considered

against "Amigos Mexicanos," suggest more than a little coincidence in relation to Villoro's Katzenberg character. For example, the reader's first introduction to Stavans in *Latino USA* is the following: "The Author, Scientific name *Deus obnoxious spanglishicus*" (xvi). In a move that perhaps implies possessing more self-awareness than Katzenberg, who does not realize how he is the object of his own aloof socio-cultural follies, Stavans opts to define himself from the get-go in consciously selected terms that are decidedly self-effacing. His introduction goes on to claim how he is "[r]esponsible for the following mess" and that "most of us here don't really like him" (xvi). Rather than achieve a laugh at his own expense, he precariously positions himself in the role of "obnoxious Spanish-speaking God-Author" (Allatson 233). This positioning reminds of Katzenberg's many allusions about his omnipotence (savvy that is universally off the mark). This God-Author-Culturist stance is again apparent with several secondary character choices, namely a toucan, who declares how he and his fellow cohort should be grateful that the author (Stavans) created them at all, and a *calavera* (skull/skeleton), who lauds the author for having been an "exemplary historian," one who has not "miss[ed] any major event in [Latino] history so far" (Allatson 235, Stavans 59).

Other ancillary characters in Stavan's graphic historiography are La Maestra, Cantinflas (a Mexican film star), El Santo (a masked *luchador* [wrestler]), and Captain America (adversary to El Santo). It appears that the role of these characters is to punctuate the journey through Hispanic history with cheeky zingers and corroborative one-liners, but it would be more accurate to home in on how their carnivalized appearances and behaviors offer more of a "damaging trope of latinidad" than perhaps the "irreverent historical entertainment" Stavans sought (Allatson 232, 239). As Allatson points out, Stavans feels as though such carnivalizations are harmless due to reliance on a brand of "intellectual cosmopolitanism" (also interpreted as simple superiority),[14] much in the same way Katzenberg initially hides behind his self-stated expertise and sanitized musings of what Mexico and its history, language, and culture "are" (243).

Into the Beautiful North

For the principal characters in Luis Alberto Urrea's novel, *Into the Beautiful North*—Nayeli, Yolo, Vampi, Tacho, and Aunt Irma—an interesting contrast emerges when compared to "Mariachi" and "Amigos Mexicanos." Urrea opens the novel by framing how all the events that will transpire occur because of two factors: first, the moving in of *bandidos* (gangs/gang members) to the town of Tres Camarones, and second, nearly all the men having left the town to seek work in the U.S. because of the severe devaluation of the *peso* that occurred in the 1990s. The reader is quickly informed that the term "immigration" was not one in common usage or even recognized before that, and that this remote town, as had happened to many others, was one that "the modern era had somehow passed by" (4). Aunt Irma perhaps best represents the consternation felt towards the socio-economic changes of the latter part of the twentieth century that resulted in the mass exodus to the U.S. During an exchange with a vegetable seller, she explains how "[t]hese beans are grown here in Sinaloa… The best frijoles in the world!... Then they're sold to the United States. Then they sell them back to us" (36). She makes several such comments that are tinted with an exasperation about what she perceives to be a self-defeating series of systems and policies, self-defeating not only on a personal level, but also more broadly in terms of stagnating the vibrancy of her community, state, and nation.

Much discussion on this topic ensues and it is decided that Nayeli, Yolo, Vampi, and Tacho will venture north to bring members of their community who had immigrated northward back to Tres Camarones. As

[14] "I write in English for Americans about topics they know little about, and I write in Spanish for Mexicans about topics they are unacquainted with. I act as a bridge, I symbolize dialogue… I am the owner of a divided self" (Stavans, as quoted in Allatson 243).

the journey begins, this cohort of young adults is naïve and ill-prepared, almost *gringo*-esque (a là Katzenberg) in their gullibility and naivety. Individual disorientation is conveyed by the following reactions: "It'll be a miracle if we survive traveling through our own country," says Yolo; "Did you know it would be like this?" asks Nayeli, and "I'm not worried about the Yunaites [United States] anymore," answers Tacho (78). The group's feelings of consternation only increase as they approach Tijuana. Looking out the windows of a bus, "[None] of them could believe the world they had entered," one with "shacks and huts," where "fences appeared as all trees vanished" and "shanty towns surrounded the dusty center" (85-86). They find themselves as house guests in a *dompe pueblo* (garbage dump village) from where it was possible to see into the U.S. and where Nayeli experiences the first of three moments of candid contemplation: "It shook her, this place. It was awful. Tragic. Yet… yet it moved her. The sorrow she felt. It was profound. It was moving, somehow. The sorrow of the terrible abandoned garbage dump and the sad graves and the lonesome shacks made her feel something so far inside herself that she could not define it or place it" (119).

A second incident of similar preoccupation occurs after the Border Patrol apprehends the group of teens during an attempt to cross the U.S.-Mexican border. Observing the holding pens, Nayeli ponders how:

> Most of the people herded into the pens were like them. Just… people. Small, brown, tired people. Nayeli was stunned to see mothers with children—kids weeping and snot faced… [She] looked at the migra [immigration] agents through the iron mesh. Big men. Happy, bright-faced men. Shiny and crisp. Green uniforms. Short hair. Mustaches. What made them different from her? She could not tell. (155)

Finally, now having crossed into the U.S., a third ruminative moment akin to the above takes place when Chava Chavarín, an old romantic interest of Aunt Irma, who lives in the U.S. and becomes a part of the haphazard crew, takes Nayeli to Camp Guadalupe, a local informal migrant camp, to potentially recruit the younger workers for the repatriation mission:

> Chava said, 'This is the richest country in the world.' He looked at each of them. 'This is the richest state of that rich country.' They watched him. 'And this is probably the richest city of the richest state of the richest country'…They could smell the camp before they saw it: smoke, trash, human waste… Improvised tents were gathered in a rough U shape. Splintery poles propped up sheets of plastic…They had managed to hammer together a little wooden shrine… In it, covered by a shingle roof, standing on a small shelf, was a statue of the Blessed Mother. (248-249)

While Nayeli is the character whose internalization of the journey is most strongly conveyed to the reader, these three moments in particular are more striking than other introspections that she shares. They stand out for their likeness: all three instances evoke a palpable sense of stripping away preconceptions and, more importantly, acquainting her with a much more complex situation than perhaps she was initially anticipating. The result is a heightened sense of urgency that increases as each of the above three moments is absorbed to achieve their mission: to bring back Mexican men to their Mexican communities so that they might prosper for the benefit of Mexico. The shock that the teens experience at realizing the social and economic conditions of some of their compatriots, coupled with what Nayeli experiences in the three situations described above, highlights the promulgation of policies and relations that have led to economic and creative "brain drain" from Mexico northward. Thus, the tale becomes not a story of fetishizing violence and poverty in the way that Villoro condemns by way of Katzenberg, but rather a story from within which a sense of *ya basta* (enough) increasingly roils through each chapter until the end, when at its boiling point, Nayeli makes her triumphant return to her hometown (compatriots in tow).

The revitalization of Tres Camarones is brought to fruition by young, female heroines who appear to break away from the confines of a traditional literary "discourse that discourages women from leaving the private sphere, the purported site of patriarchal protection and authority" and immersing into the "public space" that has so long been "imagined as inherently dangerous" for women characters (Fregoso 18). The very purpose of their mission, to retrieve men who had fled to the U.S. seeking work, could imply a dependency on men to "fix" things or to "protect" "them" (the women). Yet, the men were recruited via advertisements that were placed in newspapers and through word-of-mouth spreading among "taco shops and barrio stores" precisely to place the "applicants" in a situation of being interviewed and evaluated by women, a valuation assessment in which the women would have the final say over who would return with them (Urrea 298). As the men nervously await their inquisition, they emit a certain unsteadiness fueled in part by an opportunity to be released from what became an imprisonment being "stuck" in the United States, desperately hoping that a woman, Aunt Irma, will "unstick" them and bring them home (literally and symbolically), something they appear to be unable to do on their own (Urrea 298-300).

Kanellos notes that national protection and perpetuation is often the obligation and responsibility of female characters, something that is evident with Urrea's literary decision to develop young female characters as the heroines of Tres Camarones. While Kanellos suggests that such salvation traditionally occurred "within the domestic sphere" (123), Aunt Irma, Nayeli, and her cohort break completely from this norm, as the entirety of their efforts for national deliverance occur well outside of such a space. It is worthwhile to mention another literary trait observed by Kanellos: the lore of the *verde*, a neophyte "who misinterprets American language and culture and becomes the subject of extreme exploitation" (31). Nayeli would be the logical and obvious candidate to illustrate such a *verde* in this particular narrative as she, the leader of the expedition, possesses no first-hand knowledge of the place to whence she is attempting to voyage. This includes a grasp of the more extreme actual and literal border crossing tactics, legal consequences, physical dangers (sexual and other), and the more mundane American linguistic, currency, and societal norms, all of which would be obvious obstacles to success. Kanellos pessimistically observes how, in literature, time after time immigrants who attempt to pursue the American Dream "fail" and "meet their demise," becoming overwhelmed and undone by the devastatingly and paralyzing American technology and materialism that takes shape in a variety of forms (57). Yet Nayeli does not succumb, nor does she fail in her pursuit. Rather, she seems to thrive, even after a multitude of obstacles present themselves. Nayeli is not seduced by U.S./American materiality or capital and is in fact many times repulsed by the conflicting messages of the land of opportunity and the land of the free born from the labor of immigrants, contrasted with the hateful vitriol of public radio and multiple enmity-infused interactions that punctuate the entire second half of the novel. In this way, the contrasts between her native Mexico and the foreign U.S. become increasingly a motivating factor to not remain and to return to Tres Camarones as soon, and as proudly, as possible.

When the moment arrives for Nayeli to commence her personal quest to find her father in Kankakee, Illinois, she embarks on a cross-country journey that spans the distance of half of the U.S. with only her friend Tacho (a homosexual male), a mini-van, and a bilingual dictionary. Nayeli literally fulfills the notion that by "cross[ing] spatial boundaries and borders" she (a woman) can "blur, disrupt, and resist them," thus figuratively embodying the concept that in doing so females are able to access new spaces, unavailable to male counterparts, within which social change and revolution is able to take place (Kanellos 109). Indeed, the novel concludes with the triumphant return of Nayeli to Tres Camarones with male charges in tow. This closely relates to what Fregoso terms as "a new identity formation of cross-border feminisms" (47).

Additionally, the way Aunt Irma breaks with gendered traditions that would have been imposed on a woman of her generation is best evidenced through her mayoral campaign venture during which she wholly rejects the social and mental conditioning that women were "too moody, flighty, illogical, and incapable" to take on the role of Municipal President (Urrea 39). It was Aunt Irma who "cajol[ed]" and "curs[ed]" them (the women) "out of their ruts," and Nayeli, of the next generation, who served as the "driving force among the young of the village" (39), both representative of a trending away from the traditional discourse in which, according to Fregoso, women represent a closed conservatism while men represent progressivity and modernity (77). Aunt Irma and Nayeli are neither inert nor backward looking, nor are they illustrative of a cultural tradition that previously leaned towards conservative gendered principles. For the men in the novel, even Tacho, Atómiko (an enlightened, ostentatious former soldier who voluntarily and proudly resides in the *dompe*), and Chava (Aunt Irma's former flame), derive their "forward-thrusting" momentum and potency from Aunt Irma and Nayeli, suggesting that progressive modernized patriotism is both activated and actualized by women seizing "a new kind of femininity" (Urrea 42). Indeed, the identities of these two lead heroines "deliberately challenge sexual and gender norms, transgress gender roles, thwart behaviors and expectations, and defy dominant… boundaries of domesticity and femininity" (Fregoso 96).

In developing such strong female protagonists, Urrea achieves a narrative that illustrates the increasingly urgent demand to "challenge the imposition of American culture" and to "preserve a Hispanic past" (and prospect for a future) that is in constant peril to U.S./American commercial exploitation and takeover (Kanellos 102). Nayeli becomes a "transmigrant woman" who unabashedly challenges and shatters stereotypes about *Mexicana* (Mexican) or Latina docility (Kanellos 102). The fact that much of this occurs while she is physically in the U.S. is perhaps significant; she is essentially "within enemy lines" of hostile anti-Mexican socio-cultural confrontation and yet comes out the victor. It is interesting to observe that Aunt Irma (of an older generation) is quite upfront about having neither the desire nor the energy to embark on the journey to the U.S. herself and obliges Nayeli (of a younger generation) to lead the expedition, perhaps symbolic of a type of cultural passing of the torch.

Conclusions

The internal and external dichotomies that result from shedding its long-held sense of subordination are at the forefront of "Mariachi," "Amigos Mexicanos," and *Into the Beautiful North*. Themes of masculinity, femininity, age, and national-international movement are re-negotiated through the situations within which characters find themselves, and problematic tropes are challenged by advancing narratives of contestation and re-invention that break from previous literary norms. Trans-nationality becomes a plot device; Mexico and the U.S. are perceptible characters with whom protagonists' own development advances and crises resolve. Villoro and Urrea access the literary sphere to author into being more progressive versions of long-held archetypes. Writing into existence a cast of characters with non-traditional traits ensures that their newly honed active voice will be consumed and will reverberate.

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Prometheus Unhinged—Madness, Myth, Terrorism, and Outcast Identity in *Fight Club*

Abstract: Identity, in all its simplicity and complexity, can be defined as a continuum of the ego or the sum of the representations of the self. However, when the different parts in the sum wage war to one another in a split personality that stems from the unbearable weariness of the Byung-Chul Han's achievement-subject, how can one's identity be defined and realized? This article answers this question by using Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* and its protagonist, and to this end, a post-structural, psychoanalytical analysis is provided which explains how *Fight Club* can act as a revisitation of the Promethean myth in a comparison with Kafka's *Tired Prometheus*, and how Byung-Chul Han's *Burnout Society* and Jean Baudrillard's *The Spirit of Terrorism* can help explain the context of the mythical struggle between the neglected subject and its creator, and why it occurs thus in a post-industrial society.

Keywords: Myth of Prometheus, Fight Club, process of individuation, outcast, identity, madness

> THERE ARE four legends concerning Prometheus: […] According to the fourth everyone grew weary of the meaningless affair. The gods grew weary, the eagles grew weary, the wound closed wearily. (Kafka)

Introduction

"[T]he contemporary achievement-subject inflicting violence on, and waging war with, itself. […] Prometheus, the subject of self-exploitation, has been seized by overwhelming fatigue." With these sentences, Byung-Chul Han (35) draws a comparison between the classical myth of Prometheus, and the modern citizen in postindustrial societies who, past the stage of being an obedience-subject and into the stage of achievement-subject now, bounds himself to work and productivity by means of the values taught by society: motivation, consumerism, initiative, and a quest for perfection. The Narrator in Chuck Palahniuk's *Fight Club* (1996) is first presented as a person dealing with extreme fatigue and a near pathological obsession with creating a perfect life through consumerism and the adherence to social expectations. His inability to stand out, to clearly understand who he is or what he wants, or his lack of a name clearly point to an unfulfilled quest for identity and psychosexual development process.

This essay provides an analysis of *Fight Club* and its protagonist through a poststructuralist approach. The first part of the essay examines the issue of the achievement-subject as the Own and the immunological-subject as the Other through Byung-Chul Han's theories in *The Burnout Society* (2015), the relationship between virality, terrorism, and duality in modern society through Jean Baudrillard's *The Spirit of Terrorism* (2013), and how both approaches are linked to identity in *Fight Club*. After this, a comparison is drawn to link the promethean myth to the Narrator in *Fight Club* though philosophy and myth criticism. The second part of the essay analyses the Narrator's quest for identity and his attempts to undergo a process of psychological individuation. To this end, Jacques Lacan's theory of psychosexual development and Julia Kristeva's theory of Abjection are used.

Madness, Terrorism, Duality and Myth

In his seminal work *The Burnout Society*, Byung-Chul Han first presented his idea of the *burnout*, an undefined feeling of fatigue in response to what he termed the achievement society. According to him, having moved from Foucault's disciplinary society (1977) on to a society that conditioned individuals through "projects, initiatives and motivation" (Han 9) had also changed the paradigm and modal verb that governed society from *May Not* to *Can*. More specifically, Byung-Chul argues that the problem mostly resides in how *Unlimited Can* was the positive modal verb of achievement society and that the affirmation "'Yes, we can'—epitomizes achievement society's positive orientation" (8). The old paradigm had controlled subjects through constant vigilance and laws. The new one coaxed subjects into labor in hopes of fulfilling societally imposed *false needs* (Horkheimer and Adorno 20-21). Such false needs and excess of positivity—represented by the modal *Can* in opposition to the former *May Not*—lead to an ennui that has traditionally been linked to postindustrial societies. For Ehrenberg, depression appears in response to the necessity to govern and become oneself. Once freed from the tenets of disciplinary society, the new subject is made to believe they work for themselves, and they belong to themselves alone. He claims, "The depressed individual is unable to measure up; he is tired of having to become himself" (4) and this inability to fulfill the new *Unlimited Can* is what makes subjects depressed. This phenomenon has neither been addressed by philosophers alone nor is it something new; it is deeply related to Maslow's self-actualization, and it was framed by Carl Rogers as "the curative force in psychotherapy—man's tendency to actualize himself, to become his potentialities […] to express and activate all the capacities of the organism" (4). According to Han, it is the inability to fulfill the unlimited ability that society has convinced us of having that leads to that madness: "The complaint of the depressive individual, 'Nothing is possible,' can only occur in a society that thinks, 'Nothing is impossible.' No-longer-being-able-to-be-able leads to destructive self-reproach and auto-aggression" (11). Paradoxically, the societally wrought illusion of unlimited power leads the individual to becoming more conscious of their own limitations than ever before.

It is that desperate struggle to *have* and to *become* that provokes, in turn, this depression. It must be noted, however, that when Ehrenberg speaks of depression, he is not speaking about Major Depressive Disorder, but about a struggle to fulfill or self-actualize on several levels, namely agency, potentiality, and identity. The depressed individual, first of all believes through experience that "nothing is possible," as mentioned above, but they are also made to believe that "everything is possible" (11). This inability to fulfill their perceived potentialities triggers a split in their identity, in turn; it results in "identity insecurity and […] the inability to act," which in turn creates a new, more capable identity that can deal with the *Unlimited Can*: "the individual emerges from this unknown person she cannot control, this irreducible part that Westerners call the unconscious" (228). Likewise, this split identity is one of the defining features of the depressed achievement-subject for Han. Stemming from a "decline of conflict as a reference point," depression can be explained through the lack of conflict in the achievement society. Now, "the totality of capital, which seems to be absorbing everything, represents consensual violence" (46-47) and also the violence that is redirected inwards: in a paradigm of *compulsive freedom*, auto-exploitation becomes the norm, and "[t]he exploiter is simultaneously the exploited" (11). This duality of the identity is explained by how, in achievement societies, the superego is positivized into the ideal-ego, and this makes the achievement-subject project themselves onto the ideal-ego in turn (46). This projection pushes the achievement-subject down to lower levels of self-esteem and to crave resemblance to their ideal-ego even more pressingly: "In view of the ego ideal, the real ego appears as a loser buried in self-reproach. The ego wages war with itself," explains Han, who then concludes with the idea that the "gap between the real ego and the ego ideal then brings forth auto-aggression" (46-47). At this point, it is legitimate to speak of a personality split in a war between the ego and the ideal-ego.

This struggle between the ego and the ideal-ego in the insecure identity of the achievement-subject is related to Han's immunological model of society and subject, as well. Just like the Narrator in *Fight Club* eventually suffers a split and a struggle ensues between the Own and the Other thereafter, the reflection of this fight in society will take place throughout the novel, too. As Han says, in an epoch where society tries to distinguish between "inside and outside, friend and foe, self and other," everything foreign is fought and cast out: "every immune reaction is a reaction to Otherness" (1-2). This Otherness usually provokes an immune reaction that dissolves boundaries; the Other intrudes into the Own and seeks to negate it. Such a dissolution of boundaries and negation of the Self can only be prevented by "a small amount of self-inflicted harm [that] protects one from a much larger danger, which proves deadly" (4). Han explains how dealing with the internal Other is much more difficult than with any external enemy, because it inhabits the deepest fathoms of our own psyche and Self. The Other acts out with viral violence (6), "slipping in everywhere like a virus, welling up from all the interstices of power" (Baudrillard, *Spirit of Terrorism* 15). This viral nature of the Other is equated to the way a sleeper cell works, undermining the Self from within. To Baudrillard, viral violence in the Self works like a terrorist sleeper cell, and represents a revolt of the singular against the global (qtd. in Han 6). This is a really appropriate allegory, given *Fight Club* portrays the internal struggle between the Narrator and his viral Other, Tyler Durden, but also between the Narrator and society at large. Arundhati Roy explains this dyadic nature, claiming that terrorism acts as society's Other, "as its twin—the diabolical twin of the system" (qtd. in Han 53). Baudrillard also frames terrorism as society's other; as he states, society—the West—creates the conditions for the appearance of terrorism, and that, by "seizing all the cards for itself, it forced the Other to change the rules" (*Spirit of Terrorism* 9). Likewise, the Narrator eventually creates his own club and project with their own rules against society, and Durden likewise creates rules against the Narrator, when the new rules force the Narrator to occupy a liminal place outside the Club, after he is told that leaders should be outside now, in the shadow, and is commanded to "clear the center of the club" (Palahniuk 142, 179). It has to be said that Durden's fight club does not seek political power or leverage, but to change the status quo and liberate men: "to teach each man in the project that he had the power to change history. We, each of us, can take control of the world" (122). As Baudrillard says, "the aim is no longer to transform […] but to radicalize it by sacrifice" (*Spirit of Terrorism* 11). It is, indeed, a revolution to liberate others. Baudrillard also draws a parallelism between society and God in his work: "'Even God cannot declare war on Himself.' Well, He can. The West, in the position of God […] has become suicidal and declared war on itself" (*Spirit of Terrorism* 7). Thus, just like Byung-Chul Han's achievement-subject wages war on itself through otherization, Baudrillard's West—in the position of God—declares war on itself, and Zeus creates the condition wherefrom Prometheus starts his rebellion, the Narrator creates Durden to wage war on himself, and Fight Club to wage war on society—his God—.

In this regard, the Narrator can be read as a modern version of Prometheus. The Narrator is an immunological-subject that has been otherized by society and now acts like a virus in it, while at the same time having his own viral Other inside, Durden. His otherized and viral nature might initially make it seem that Durden is an unwelcome split in the Narrator's personality, but it is said in the novel that he would not even be there if the Narrator did not want him (Palahniuk 168); indeed, the Narrator, bereft of identity, purpose, a father figure and a God that he can trust, creates that alternative identity when he suffers his split. In *Fight Club*, the Narrator rebels against God—society—, like a modern Prometheus, to liberate other men. Also, he symbolically sacrifices fat in the form of soap for that society; Prometheus robs Zeus of the best part of the animal to be offered up and gives him fat and bones instead just like Durden robs bags of fat to make soap and gives that back to society. Likewise, like a modern Prometheus, he receives divine retribution; a just *nemesis* for his *hubris*. Lacking a father figure and a God, he subconsciously creates one—Tyler—but that takes the form of a punishment, too. The Narrator describes

how he died and was reborn every day, just like Prometheus is attacked by an eagle every day and regenerates at night. In this case, the Narrator does not only feel fatigued because of society, but also because of Tyler. Unbeknownst to him, his split identity is already taking control of his body every night, making him grow weary like Kafka's Prometheus (Kafka 475), subjected to self-exploitation and seized by overwhelming fatigue, like Han's Prometheus (Han 35). Eventually, just like the Narrator has to rise up against society, he ends up having to rise against Durden too, now elevated to a divine figure, "Tyler Durden the Great and Powerful. God and father" (Palahniuk 199) and "Everybody in Project Mayhem is part of Tyler Durden and vice versa" (155). Indeed, even if the Narrator creates Durden as an act of rebellion against his first God—society—, he promptly substitutes it with another divine figure, thus losing the freedom and autonomy that he wants for humankind, and therefore making his quest for an identity impossible. Eventually, the Narrator also rebels against this second God—Durden—and completely loses his freedom in a psychiatric ward. Just like Prometheus, he ends up permanently bound for seeking to rebel against God to help humankind.

Durden: Savior and Villain

> If you're male and you're Christian and living in America, your father is your model for God. And if you never know your father, if your father bails out and dies or is never at home, what do you believe about God? […] you spend your life searching for a father and God. (Palahniuk141)

This quotation frames one of the main themes of this novel: lost faith and abandonment. *Fight Club* portrays problems of both social and personal identity in middle-class white-collar males who feel at a loss in modern western society, and whose parents can no longer provide any insight. This poses the question that the Narrator, throughout the novel, will try to work out and answer: What now?

The Narrator is presented as a typical middle-class white-collar male. Initially, and from what he describes about his lifestyle, it would be reasonable to assume that he should be satisfied with it. However, within the Introduction to the novel, the first signpost of what will become one of the biggest motifs in the literary work is found: "men with good white-collar jobs and absent fathers." These absent fathers are a symbol of the loss of identity and values that the Narrator suffers, an idea that is strengthened by his lack of a name. Along with the references to God, it can be read as an inability to rely on traditional values and Manichean concepts of Good and Evil, something that leaves the Narrator alone to fend in a society which makes no sense to him, and bereft of objectives: "Pull a lever. Push a button. You don't understand any of it, and then you just die" (12). The mindlessness evoked in this second quotation marks the failure of modern society to provide any fulfilling new roles for middle-class workers, who live "a copy of a copy of a copy" (21) and helps explain the Narrator's pathology. As Han states, "Burnout syndrome occurs when the ego overheats, which follows from too much of the Same" (7). The idea that repetition can cause systemic violence is also developed by Baudrillard who claims, "He who lives by the Same shall die by the Same" (*Transparency of Evil* 65). The Narrator's pathology stems from a life of mindless repetition and imitation—doing the *Same* and trying to become the *Same*—, no real objectives, and being encouraged to do more. He is Han's achievement-subject, and his split personality, Durden, an immunological-subject, will therefore redirect that viral violence towards society and its rules. When they mention that the Parker Morris building is about to collapse, and "slam down on the national museum which is Tyler's real target" (Palahniuk 14), the real intentions of his fight club are revealed: a total war on western culture—the first God, according to Baudrillard—. The name chosen for the building that they target, Parker Morris, can be read as a reference to the Parker Morris Committee, an institution that set the standards for living and dimensions in typical furniture and houses, in 1961 in their *Homes for*

Today and Tomorrow. In other words, they target an institution that claims to show how people should live, a representation of Lacan's Name-of-the-Father (67). The Narrator stands against his symbolic father figure—law—and against his God—society—just like Prometheus does against Zeus, father of the gods.

This cultural war, this Promethean rebellion against Baudrillard's God, starts in the second chapter. The Narrator's first symptom, insomnia, links back to Han's ideas: just like Han's tired Prometheus, the Narrator is exhausted from having to become himself (4), and the split in his identity now leaves him awake at night. He asks for "lipstick-red Seconals" (19), a symbol of the feminine company that he craves, but it is denied to him by his doctor. This introduces another central topic: the conflict between masculinity and femininity in the Narrator's individuation process. The Narrator exhibits traits traditionally coded as feminine: his hobbies comprise collecting condiments and redecorating his flat, which he defines as his "nesting instinct": "the right set of dishes. Then the perfect bed. The drapes. The rug. Then you're trapped in your lovely nest, and the things you used to own, now they own you" (43-44). The Narrator is given *false needs* (Horkheimer and Adorno 20-21) by society to make up for his lack of goals, but that only makes the problem worse. Moreover, the Narrator's lack of identity signals he is, in a psychosexual development sense, still a child. His mother is never mentioned, and his father is, as remarked before, an unreliable role model: "After college, I called him long distance and said, now what? My dad didn't know. When I got a job and turned twenty-five, long distance, I said, now what? My dad didn't know, so he said, get married. I'm a thirty-year-old boy, and I'm wondering if another woman is really the answer I need" (Palahniuk 51).

The father's failure to guide the Narrator in life makes him doubt his father because he cannot reconcile that fact with the triumphant and resourceful idea of man that he has been spoon-fed since childhood. He needs a nurturing figure he can reject, and a father he can confront, but he had neither of them. In this light, it makes sense that his insomnia should be cured when he finally finds a womb where he can feel protected. The first female character in the book, Chloe, cannot satisfy the Narrator's needs because he needs a symbolic mother figure and she can only offer sex, and even her "therapeutic physical contact" fails to help him because she, whom he describes as "a skeleton dipped in yellow wax" (19), does not have the physical traits that Jack identifies with motherhood. It will be in Bob where Jack finally finds a place where he can finally let his guard down and seek protection: "Bob was closing in around me with his arms, and his head folding down to cover me. Then I was lost inside oblivion, dark and silent, and complete, and when I finally stepped away from his soft chest, the front of Bob's shirt was a wet mask of how I looked crying" (22).

Bob, a man with no testicles, an excess of estrogen, and what the Narrator describes as "bitchtits," provides him with the womb that he needs to heal and grow. He even states that every evening he died and then he was born (22) every time he cried on Bob's chest; he is being punished every night by his split identity, Tyler, who leaves him damaged and exhausted like Kafka's tired Prometheus, and every morning he resurrects, regenerated. The Narrator also remarks that it was the loss of all hope that meant freedom to him, which would be the main idea behind Fight Club when they first create it; again, the Narrator's objective is to free humankind, and "to teach every man" (122), just like Prometheus brings knowledge and fire to humankind to free them. When he starts losing sleep again after meeting Marla, who, he claims, reflected his lie, he cannot recognize her for the mother figure that he needs because of her traditionally-coded-as-masculine traits: Marla is a carefree character who smokes, has a raspy voice, is assertive and commanding, and easily controls the Narrator in their first exchange (37-39). The dynamic that the Narrator has with both Chloe and Marla is also reflective of one of the main topics in the book. Not only is he devoid of real and tangible new values to associate to a healthy masculinity; the Narrator still has internalized sexism and relies on traditional masculine values that stop him from being able to relate to women in a healthy, functional way. He feels threatened by Chloe's sexual forwardness and bold

ways, and by Marla's assertiveness when occupying what he describes as "his" groups. This is linked to the fears of liberated women that were reflected in early Gothic doppelganger literature. As Linda Dryden claims in her *The Modern Gothic and Literary Doubles* (2003), not only did unstable identity become "closely linked with the labyrinthine metropolis" (19), but also with women who, increasingly, "were claiming the streets and the public spaces of the city for themselves" (62). Walkowitz also elaborates on this point, explaining that the presence of liberated women in traditional man's spaces "provoked territorial tensions and hostile social acts on the part of men towards women" (50).

When the Narrator first becomes acquainted with Tyler, his split and double, the reader is presented with a deeply symbolic and obscure character: Tyler can appear to be the Narrator's necessary father figure at first, but it actually represents Jack Lacan's ideal-ego, an idealized version of the Self. Tyler is attractive, assertive, and carefree. Tyler also works as a banquet waiter where he continually sabotages food by urinating or ejaculating in it, or as a film projectionist where he splices images of genitalia into the reels. This can be understood as Tyler possessing Lacan's symbolic phallus (281), something that the Narrator needs for his own individuation in his pro-Oedipal phase. So far, he has surrounded himself with castrated men (Palahniuk 21) in his groups, but now he has a father figure that he could confront to continue his individuation process. Tyler, however, and just like the Narrator, has a repetitive and mindless job. Where the Narrator simply has to apply a formula to see if initiating a recall is necessary after a car crash, Tyler simply stands "between the two projectors with a lever in each hand, and watch the corner of the screen" waiting for a signal to pull the lever (28) and is, therefore, also immersed in the same toxic routine of repetition that, as Han and Baudrillard explain, engenders violence. So far, the Narrator's problems can be traced back to his lack of parental figures, identity issues, and the ego exhaustion from repetition. It will be these issues which will prompt his subconscious Ideal-ego, Tyler Durden, to create Fight Club.

Fight Club is a powerful and complex symbol in the novel. First of all, it helps the Narrator to improve what Han terms "insecure identity" (228), in accordance to social theory, which states that people see themselves more as the interchangeable exemplar of a social category than as unique personalities defined by their differences from others (Turner) and that depressed or threatened self-esteem promotes intergroup discrimination (Hogg). Social theory also postulates that depersonalization is not a loss of Self, but a redefinition of the Self in terms of group membership (McGarty) and that said depersonalized Self—social identity—is as meaningful as a personalized Self—personal identity—to the subject (Haslam *et al.*). Therefore, the creation of the club allows the Narrator to redefine his identity through social group definition. He had been an outcast in his previous groups, a "faker" and a "tourist" (Palahniuk 24, 35), but this new group gathers disenfranchised men without goals and who feel imprisoned in society. Again, as a creator of Fight Club and by trying to teach and grant freedom to other men, he becomes a Promethean figure. Before the creation of Project Mayhem, however, it only serves the purpose of fighting things the Narrator and Tyler hated, like the memories of their fathers: "Me, I knew my father for about six years, but I don't remember anything. My dad, he starts a family every six years. This isn't so much like a family as it's like he sets up a franchise" (50). Tyler himself claims that he never knew his father (49), because he had already rejected his idea. Tyler is portrayed as an ideal role model at the beginning, and possesses all the traits the Narrator would like for himself, such as total independence from a father figure, sexual assertiveness, confidence, and leadership skills. After their first fight, Tyler reveals that he had been fighting his father, and the Narrator comes to the conclusion that they "didn't need a father to complete themselves" (53-54). This is a turning point as it signals how the reference model will complete its shift from the Narrator's father to Tyler. This shift, also, will change his relationship with Marla after this point.

Marla, initially regarded as just an intruder in his life for "stealing his groups," will progressively take more and more of his and Tyler's attention. After she calls him for help, the first instance where Marla

will seek the Narrator instead of the other way around, and he ignores her call, Tyler saves her from her suicide attempt (59). Bereft of his original father figure, and now feeling that he is losing Tyler's attention (60), the Narrator starts devoting himself more to the fight club, something that will eventually make it lose its capacity to find freedom and heal, as he needed to give up all hope and all worldly possessions, and the club holds more relevance in his life every day, as their leader: "Worker bees can leave. Even drones can fly away. The queen is their slave" (63). This marks the failure of the Narrator to fulfill his individuation process. Tyler, first elevated to a father figure, is slowly losing interest in him because of Marla, and the club can no longer fulfill its initial intended role. Tyler, also, is for the first time presented in a darker light. After the Narrator takes up a job as a waiter and needs to wash his trousers, Tyler sets to cooking fat to make soap, making Tyler more of a Promethean figure in possession of knowledge and wisdom who can teach the Narrator, and he guides him through a symbolic ritual (66-72). In the ritual, Tyler claims that until the Narrator internalizes the fact that he is going to die someday, he is useless to him, and recreates a symbolic sacrifice by burning the Narrator's hand with lye: "You have to see […] how the first soap was made of heroes. Think about the animals used in product testing […] the monkeys shot into space. […] Without their death, their pain, without their sacrifice […] we would have nothing" (77-78). This symbolic sacrifice foreshadows Tyler's ultimate intention: he will offer up the Narrator and the fight club members, whom he will call space monkeys later, for the sake of his crusade against society. Also, he is first acting as the Narrator's *abject*, since the Narrator is confronted by the sheer experience of corporeal reality and death when Tyler first hurts him (Kristeva 4, 15). In this part of the book, the Narrator starts to feel the punishment from acting out against society to free other men. Playing with the mythical trick that Prometheus plays on Zeus, the image reverses the offerings and, where the Narrator expects Tyler to cook fat into soap, he instead tricks him and burns the Narrator's flesh. This also brings a new light to Tyler's symbolism that starts sharing traits of the Narrator's symbolic father and those of a god that punishes him for his acts. Later, when the Narrator and Tyler discuss ways to make some money for Tyler's project: he reveals that he had sent Marla's mother fifteen pounds of chocolate, and telegrams her to make her undergo liposuction surgery and send him back the fat, which Tyler would later use to make soap bars. It is implied that the Narrator was not aware, and that "for weeks" he "had ignored what Tyler had been up to" (88-89). However, when confronted about his now-secretive behavior, Tyler says that if the Narrator loved him, he would have to trust him. This action strains the friendship that the Narrator thinks he has with Marla, and marks the first time that he distrusts Tyler, while also further cementing him in a god-like position that asks not for understanding but blind trust (89). Later, the Narrator, when confronted by his boss about his misuse of the printer to reproduce fight club's rules, Tyler's venomous influence comes to the surface, and the Narrator threatens to kill his boss and office workmates (98). After the confrontation, he learns that Tyler has been starting new fight clubs elsewhere—just like his father stopped giving him attention and started setting up new family franchises elsewhere—when Bob recommends that he attends one of the night meetings. For the first time, too, the Narrator is asked whether or not he knows who Tyler is, signaling that he is growing stronger: he is increasingly unaware of Tyler's actions, while Tyler is becoming a cult-like figure (101). This, also, starts slowly moving Tyler from the symbolic Lacanian father figure that the Narrator needed him to be for his individuation process.

With the gradually growing detachment between Tyler and the Narrator, the latter starts becoming more involved with Marla. After she calls him to help her determine whether she has a lump in her breast, he tries to comfort her while he feels her breast, their symbolic first sexual encounter: "Marla isn't laughing. I want to make her laugh, to warm her up. To make her forgive me […] Marla has the scar from Tyler's kiss on the back of her hand" (104-106). Again, he realizes that he has completely lost track of Tyler's actions, and that not only do they bring about pain for the Narrator, but also for the people

surrounding him. He also starts growing interested in Marla: now, finally, the former child-like Narrator is developing a sexual interest in Marla's mother figure, and, therefore, envying Tyler, who acts as a Lacanian father figure due to being the only one who maintains sexual relationships with Marla. In this scene, she finds two lumps in her breast and decides that, "if she was going to die, Marla didn't want to know about it" (108). She and the Narrator are afflicted by very real problems, unlike Tyler, who seeks self-destruction as a form of perfection: "Disaster is a natural part of my evolution […] toward tragedy and dissolution […] because only through destroying myself can I discover the greater power of my spirit" (110). Again, Tyler foreshadows his murder-suicide intention, while the Narrator is informed by the police that his flat had been destroyed by a home-made explosive device. With a parallel between both characters, when they resign their jobs after blackmailing their bosses with making all of their deeds public, all of Tyler's actions start making more sense. The Narrator realizes that Tyler had wanted to be made redundant all along, and his sabotaging was but a mere leverage to coax their companies into paying them while Tyler could devote himself to bigger projects: the creation of Project Mayhem and vandalizing the Hein Tower by burning an angry face along five floors on the façade: "Of course you read this, and want to know right away if it was part of Project Mayhem." The Narrator also learns of the other groups that Tyler has organized behind his back, organized like his original support groups: "Arson meets on Monday. Assault on Tuesday. Mischief meets on Wednesday. And Misinformation meets on Thursday. Support groups. Sort of" (119). Here, as explained by Han, the Other's violence is becoming viral (6) and acts "slipping in everywhere like a virus, welling up from all the interstices of power" (Baudrillard, *Spirit of Terrorism* 15). Fight club and Project Mayhem take on a terrorist organization's sleeper cell structure: "No one guy understands the whole plan, but each is trained to do one simple task perfectly. The rule in Project Mayhem is you have to trust Tyler" (Palahniuk 130). Increasingly presented in a darker light, Tyler keeps being cemented in a divine position that needs to be trusted blindly and, now, also as a representation of Baudrillard's God—Western society—; he is subjecting the so-called "space monkeys" to the same repetitive and identity-dissolving tasks that the Narrator had tried to escape from, and from which viral violence stems, according to Han (6).

With new fight clubs being created everywhere, it is obvious that Tyler's plans completely escape the Narrator and are bigger than initially thought. In this part, Tyler is equated to the Narrator's father again, who had left him to start new families just like Tyler had stopped giving him attention to start new fight clubs: "I am Joe's Broken Heart because Tyler's dumped me. Because my father dumped me" (134). The Narrator acknowledges that he fights because he wants to destroy "everything beautiful [he'd] never have" (123), a confirmation of his entering the next stage of father envy. On the other hand, Tyler claims that, "It's Project Mayhem that's going to save the world. A cultural ice age" (125), thus revealing for the first time his real intentions behind fight club: the aforementioned total war on western culture—Baudrillard's God—. This new phase marks another failure in the Narrator's individuation process: while he has started being intimate with Marla, Tyler has not confronted him with castration, nullifying himself as a father figure in that regard. Tyler, however, is still seen as a divine figure who must be obeyed and trusted blindly, and as a father who marks everyone just like he did the Narrator and Marla: "Tyler was never at home but after a month a few of the space monkeys had Tyler's kiss burned into the back of their hand. Then those space monkeys were gone, too" (133). The Narrator has come full circle; he can no longer find catharsis in fight club, Tyler seems to be gone, and he is, again, at a loss: "I'm not sure if Tyler is in my dream. Or if I am in Tyler's dream" (138). The Narrator has not reached the Lacanian imaginary stage yet, where the Ideal-ego is separated from the ego, and cannot recognize himself in Tyler. After waking up in his office one night, he can smell gasoline on his hands, and is taken on a car trip by some club members. The driver, paraphrasing Tyler, tells him: "If you're a male and you're Christian and living

in America, your father is your model for God. And if you never knew your father, if your father bails out or dies, what do you believe about God? […] God's hate is better than His indifference" (141).

The Narrator, who had come to see Tyler as a father figure, realizes that he needs not only Marla's attention, but also Tyler's. Unfortunately, Tyler has completely disappeared and none of the club's members will provide him with information. He asks in every bar that he sees during his job trips, only to find out he has visited all those places: "Every bar I've walked into this week, everybody's called me sir. How can a stranger know who I am? 'Everybody in Project Mayhem knows, Mr Durden'" (158). The Narrator later realizes, when speaking with Marla, that it had been him who had saved her life, thus helping him finally realize that he and Tyler had been the same person all along. The Narrator reaches the imaginary and individuation stage. And if they are the same person, can Tyler be his father figure? Tyler appears again that night, and after the Narrator asks him if he had been following him, he answers, "I wanted to ask you the same thing. You talked about me to other people, you little shit. You broke your promise. […] There isn't a me and a you anymore" (162). Tyler is here also finally revealed as an evil twin, the Narrator's violent Other who, following Han's theory, acts in a viral way. He, with his space monkeys, has been infiltrating every interstice of society to rebel: "The people you're trying to step on, we're everyone you depend on. We're the people who do your laundry and cook your food and serve your dinner. We make your bed. We guard you while you're asleep. […] We control every part of your life" (166). In this part, as well, it is explained why Tyler had never confronted the Narrator about his relationship with Marla; he acts like a father figure to his space monkeys, solely, and threatens to castrate—not figuratively or symbolically, in this case—those who threaten Project Mayhem.

Tyler is revealed to live in a liminal space. He is neither subject nor object, and simply takes control of the Narrator's body when he falls asleep (163-168). Tyler, then, works more like the Narrator's abject, a meta-liminal force within himself "which disrupts social reason," and whose encounter is traumatic because of existing outside the symbolic order (Kristeva 15). This causes a cognitive dissonance in the Narrator, who initially denies Tyler's existence:

> Oh, this is bullshit. This is a dream. Tyler is a projection. […] a dissociative personality disorder […] my hallucination.
> "Fuck that shit," Tyler says, "Maybe you're my schizophrenic hallucination."
> I was here first.
> Tyler says, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, well let's just see who's here last." (168)

With the last line, the Narrator finally understands that not only is Tyler his abject and not his role model, but also, he now threatens him, too. When he talks to Marla after his epiphany, he claims "Tyler Durden is a separate personality I've created, and now he's threatening to take over my real life" (173). The next step in the Narrator's healing will come from Bob. Bob, who had acted as a symbolic mother at the beginning, providing Jack with a womb where he could feel at peace, dies in one of the club's assignments, thus signaling Jack's loss of his mother figure, a necessary step in the process of psychosexual development in order to create an identity. Also, not only does the Narrator finally lose Bob, his mother figure, but he also rejects fight club, which had been a nurturing and guiding institution for him until recently. It had been his support group. After Bob's death he declares fight club dissolved, and tells everybody to go home. The local club's leader shouts thrice "clear the center of the club" (179), a symbolic act that tries to move the Narrator to a secondary position in the club while Tyler takes command of everything, thus reflecting in reality the Narrator's inner struggle between both personalities. The confrontation between the Narrator and the club leader and his attempt to end the club promptly ends with his being cast out: the Narrator is now his outcasts club's outcast.

This confrontation, however, does not go unpunished. He has threatened the club, so he is apprehended by fight club members, who had been instructed by Tyler to castrate him; again, a highly allegorical attack that acts as a symbol of Jack's lost masculinity and a necessary step in the individuation process. However, they only put him to sleep with drugs and leave him in his burnt down condo, after which he decides to go warn Marla of Tyler's viral violence which is, again, affecting all those around him, "The cancer I don't have is everywhere, now." He learns from her that he had killed somebody else in his sleep, and had also attacked Marla. Jack finally acknowledges he is attracted to Marla, another necessary step in his psychosexual development, from lust towards the Mother, to confronting the Father, losing the Mother, and now seeking a new one. The Narrator decides to tag everybody that night for a fight, hoping that, in a near-death experience, Tyler would disappear from his psyche and he would be able to have an identity. As he claims, "only in death do we have names. Only in death are we no longer part of fight club" (201). The Narrator is woken up by Tyler back at home: "The last thing we have to do is your martyrdom thing. Your big death thing" (203). Tyler plans to kill themselves as a public symbol for his cause, "on top of the world's tallest building," thus ending the Narrator's life and substituting his quiet and unknown persona with Tyler's. Nobody would remember him but for what Tyler did. He would, therefore, completely lose his identity, erased with the same history of Western society that Tyler wants to destroy. The Narrator, holding a gun in his own mouth, and waiting for the Parker-Morris building to collapse, is interrupted by Marla and the support groups' members. In a moment of clarity, and free from Tyler's influence after having been asked by Marla and the support group members not to kill himself, the Narrator resolves to pull the trigger, blowing his cheek and killing his split, Tyler. With a recreation of his previous support groups where he would pretend to be figuratively on his death bed, so he could have other people's attention and support, now everybody wants to stop him from killing himself. This is linked to Han's theory of immunology: "negation of negation occurs without the danger of death, because the immune system does not confront the Other itself. A small amount of self-inflicted harm protects one from a much larger danger, which would prove deadly" (4). The Narrator, acting as the Self and against the immunological subject, his Other, damages himself to prevent a bigger harm, namely his loss of identity and death. After the grand finale, the Narrator wakes up again in a mental institution: "In my Father's house are many mansions" (Palahniuk 208). Here, the psychiatrist seeing him is equated with and referred to as God throughout the chapter. This, finally, gives the Narrator an actual chance at confronting his symbolic Father figure, and his God, which are said to be the same by Durden "If you're a male and you're Christian and living in America, your father is your model for God" (141). However, if this is indeed an opportunity to confront the Father, the Narrator seems to be unable to find his original personality. Nevertheless, he is now less anxious and appears to be at ease with the adopted personality of Tyler. With his evil twin—his immunological-subject and Other—gone, he is still known to the whole world because of Tyler Durden's actions and project: "People write to me in heaven and tell me I'm remembered. That I'm their hero […] We miss you, Mr. Durden" (207-208). This can also be read as Prometheus' return to the Olympus after having been freed by Hercules; after a long time of punishment and being cast out of society, he is eventually pardoned and comes back to God, who questions his ways and his reasons to lash out. However, as Mr. Durden says—for he now accepts this identity as his—, "Yeah. Well. Whatever. You can't teach God anything" (207).

Conclusions

"Our culture has made us all the same. No one is truly white or black or rich, anymore. We all want the same. Individually, we are nothing" (134). This quote by one of Tyler's space monkeys frames the main issue in *Fight Club*: identity. Identity in *Fight Club* ceases to be a psychological issue and process to become

a social one. The protagonist cannot *become*, for, as Ehrenberg says, "The depressed individual is tired of having to become himself" (4). Likewise, he cannot *belong*, as Han says: "the social imperative only to belong to oneself makes one depressive" (10). Finally, he cannot *bond*, as Han says, too: "The late-modern achievement-subject, with a surplus of options at its disposal, proves incapable of intensive bonding" (43). All of these impossibilities, when raised in a reality where the achievement-subject is made to believe that everything is possible, are what triggers the Narrator's split: "The complaint of the depressive individual, 'Nothing is possible,' can only occur in a society that thinks, 'Nothing is impossible.' No-longer-being-able-to-be-able leads to destructive self-reproach and auto-aggression" (Han 11). Thus, this achievement-subject suffers his split—"In view of the ego ideal, the real ego appears as a loser buried in self-reproach. The ego wages war with itself"— and projects itself into the Ideal-ego. This provides a rich scenario to revisit the myth of Prometheus' rebellion and divine punishment. The myth of Prometheus works conceptually on a double level in *Fight Club*. First, the Narrator, Han's achievement-subject and, as described by him, "a tired Prometheus" (35) lashes out against Western society—Baudrillard's God—after his split. On this first level, the Narrator/Tyler act in a sacrificial way to liberate and bring knowledge to men: "to teach each man in the project that he had the power to change history" (Palahniuk 122). On the second level, the Narrator remains the only Promethean figure, since Tyler increasingly resembles an authoritarian God. On this level, the Narrator will both challenge him as a Father and as a divine figure, which will bring about the threat of castration and also of death, before the end. In the final struggle, it is implied that whoever holds more sway over their body at the moment of the murder-suicide would seemingly survive, since the Narrator shoots himself at a moment when he is both free of Tyler's influence and when Tyler's Promethean symbolism fails, since he is no longer portrayed as the sole possessor of wisdom and scientific knowledge: "This is like a total epiphany moment for me. […] I say, Tyler, you mixed the nitro with paraffin, didn't you. Paraffin never works" (204-205). This, ultimately leaves the Narrator in a strengthened position due to a more stable identity because of the support groups' members and Marla's love and recognition. As Bertens claims, "identity is constituted in interaction with what is outside of us and reflects us," and "we need the response and recognition of others […] to arrive at what we experience as our identity" (135). However, if these factors momentarily affect and bolster the Narrator's identity, they certainly do not close the dialectic circle; in the last chapter—his reconciliation with and rejection of God—he seems to be at ease with his identity, although he is referred to as Mr. Durden. Perhaps, after all, for Durden, and in a society where everything is "a copy of a copy of a copy" (21), being a recognizable Other is better than being an anonymous Self. Perhaps, like in Kafka's *Prometheus*, and given the Narrator was tired of having to become oneself (Ehrenberg 4), he ended up growing weary of "the meaningless affair" (Kafka 475). Perhaps God grew weary, the eagles grew weary, and even the wound open by the split in his personality wearily closed.

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Culture, Disgust, and Eating Disorder: A Study of Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*

Abstract: Recent considerations on the impact of culture on eating disorders have challenged the purely medical model where eating disorders are seen as clinical diseases. This paper draws from these considerations and focuses on disgust as a cultural phenomenon and its role in eating disorders in twenty-first-century South Korean fiction. Disgust is situated within a culture and works on the principle of avoidance. South Korea is a meat-eating society with its roots in patriarchy and no room for deviance. This paper explores *The Vegetarian* (2015) by Han Kang, and the main character Yeong-hye's disgust towards meat-eating as a repudiation of societal norms and its accompanying violence. It situates her eating disorder as an attempt at emancipating herself from the prescriptive roles that society ascribes to her and attaining control over herself; Yeong-hye's anorexia is associated with the trauma she experiences. Through the application of Julia Kristeva's concept of abjection, this paper interrogates the ideas of disgust in *The Vegetarian*. The paper also contributes to the existing research in the medical realm by underlining the role of culture in diseases and disorders in women.

Keywords: culture, disgust, eating disorder, anorexia, meat

Introduction

Earlier, eating disorders belonged only to the realm of medical sciences and were diseases that needed medical diagnosis and treatment. Instead, scholars such as Susan Bordo (1995) and William Ian Miller (1998) have proposed a conceptualization of eating disorders from a cultural perspective. Joan Jacobs Brumberg defines disease as a "cultural artifact defined and redefined over time" (qtd. in Bordo 64).[15] With the onset of interest in tracing the factors that contribute to eating disorders, it became discernible that culture plays a vital role, too. Since eating disorders are more common in women (Hesse-Biber et al.; Rayworth et al.; Costa-Font and Jofre-Bonet; Reiter and Davis), this paper aims at a gendered reading of eating disorders within a culture. The *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders 5* acknowledges culture-related diagnostic issues when it comes to eating disorders (American Psychiatric Association 342). Karen Barker and Graham C L Davey's study suggests that people with eating disorders display higher levels of disgust sensitivity (qtd. in Powell et al. 169). Disgust is a cultural phenomenon enriched with meanings that society ascribes to it—culture draws the binary between the disgusting and the acceptable, thereby also creating a dichotomy between them and us.

For instance, Charles Darwin takes the example of a man with smears of soup in his beard—this sight might seem disgusting to people, but neither the soup nor the man is disgusting. He also puts forth the example of a 'naked savage' touching a piece of meat, thereby rendering it disgusting (Miller 1). This conceptualization shows how culture produces meanings and assigns an object or person the status of being disgusting. Food is a crucial aspect of cultural identity—the act of choosing food, preparing it, and

[15] The defining and redefining of a disease depending on culture is evident through the study of the history of female hysteria that was considered to be a disease that inflicted women, and is no longer recognized as a disease.

serving it is reflective of power dynamics and the dominant culture (Ogden 75; Adams 47). Thus food, culture, and disgust are intricately linked.

This is reflected in Han Kang's novel *The Vegetarian*, which tells the story of Yeong-hye, a woman who lives in Seoul, South Korea. Divided into three parts—"The Vegetarian," "Mongolian Mark," and "Flaming Trees," the novel narrativizes Yeong-hye's descent into anorexia as an attempt to break off prescriptive societal norms. The novel begins with Yeong-hye as an 'ideal' homemaker. However, a series of violent dreams make her give up meat consumption, and eventually refrain from coitus with her husband, Mr. Cheong. The novel chronicles others' attempt to force Yeong-hye into eating meat again, thereby, performing the normative role in a patriarchal society. However, her refusal to do so further leads to her anorexia, affinity with flora, and subsequent 'madness.'

It is at this juncture that this paper is situated and it utilizes this idea of disgust as a cultural phenomenon to investigate the character Yeong-hye's eating disorder. This paper aims to establish the nexus between food, culture, and disgust in the case of women. It also interrogates the cultural dimension of anorexia throughout the novel. It uses discourse analysis as research methodology. The paper aims at a close reading of *The Vegetarian* and situates it in the matrix of feminism and medical studies in contemporary times.

Eating, Family, and Patriarchy

Food has multiple aspects related to it—ethnicity, gender, and class. These aspects also shape our understanding of food and cooking since "each meal is a structured social event which structures others in its own image" (Douglas 69). Cooking is conventionally considered the domain of women, especially in the Asian context, where men are the consumers. The investigation of the gendered nature of food is crucial to unpack the ramifications of Yeong-hye's eating disorder in Han Kang's *The Vegetarian*, which primarily deals with food. The anorexia begins with her disgust towards meat-eating, eventually leading to her abandonment of food altogether. Her aversion towards meat commences with a series of dreams she experiences. One day Mr. Cheong, her husband, sees her "putting the parcels of meat into the rubbish bags… Beef and pork, pieces of chicken, at least 200,000 won worth of saltwater eel" (Kang 13). Yeong-hye's giving up of meat seems incomprehensible to her husband, who thinks "the only reasonable grounds for altering one's eating habits were the desire to lose weight… it was nothing but sheer obstinacy for a wife to go against her husband's wishes as mine had done" (15). Cheong's response demonstrates how Yeong-hye's refusal to eat meat is seen as her refusal to submit to her husband. Not only is it a defiance of her husband but also of society, where Yeong-hye fails at "maintaining the edifice of home life" (Mannur 34).[16] Korea is a meat-eating and patriarchal society, where women are supposed to keep their husbands' last names even if they divorce or remarry, and this highlights the patriarchal culture prevalent there (Manzano 5). As Peggy Sanday observes, meat is historically associated with men, and there exists a correlation between animal-based economies and male power (qtd. in Adams 45). Jacques Derrida also posits a link between meat and sexuality, where he underlines the sexual nature of meat-eating—it needs to pass through the mouth, and compares it to a phallus (qtd. in Kim 2). This connection becomes evident when Yeong-hye tells Cheong that he smells of meat and refuses to satisfy his sexual desires. By equating his smell with the smell of meat, she gives up on her appetite for food at the literal and sexual levels. Therefore, Yeong-hye's refusal to eat meat is her refusal to be incorporated into a patriarchal society. Her refusal threatens her body and the community at large, where Yeong-hye poses a threat to the functioning of the patriarchal structure by making an unconventional choice, since food acts as a medium through which cultural identity is transmitted. The microcosm of home/family is disrupted and endangers the

[16] Anita Mannur's work also situates culinary narratives in the matrix of ethnicity, especially South Asian diaspora.

values upheld by the macrocosm, that is, the Korean society. In a patriarchal and hierarchical culture, the very idea of women making their own choices goes against behavioral and cultural expectations. Women like Yeong-hye are often viewed as dangerous and unstable because they transgress the norms of society.

It is only through their normalization that they can be incorporated into society again. The attempt to 'normalize' Yeong-hye continues at the dinner, where her family confronts her and tries to force her into eating meat. Family acts as one of the primary frameworks that enable the individual's entry into society. It is through family and other cultural positioning that social conduct is maintained and existing norms reaffirmed and reinstilled. This is evident in the novel—her father first attempts to cajole Yeong-hye into eating meat and later resorts to the use of force. When she emphasizes her abstinence from meat, it results in her father striking her face. The force exerted by the father is demonstrative of the violence 'deviant' women face in a patriarchal society. He forcefully inserts meat into her mouth, thereby taking away her choice and making her body 'penetrable' (Zolkos 112). This act can also be read in parallel with rape, where the female body faces forceful penetration. The violence in both these acts stems from the operating power relations where men regulate the appetite (literal and sexual) of women. The forced attempt to feed Yeong-hye meat is repeated later in the text when she is forcefully fed at the hospital, where she is fed intravenously. Yeong-hye's autonomy over her body is continuously taken away, first by her family and later by the institutions she inhabits, such as, the psychiatric hospital.

Thereby, her body, reduced to a cultural artifact, is manipulated. Yeong-hye challenges the authority of the man of the house (her father), and this confrontation is violent in nature. Her anorexia begins with her aversion to meat and is a 'dietary resistance' to the carno-phallocentric Korean society (Kim 2). It is also a response to the violence practiced and endorsed by men in a patriarchal society.

Eating, Violence, and Trauma

Yeong-hye's disgust with meat is also associated with the trauma that women face in a patriarchal society. Studies show that victims of childhood abuse and neglect, and sexual assault are more prone to eating disorders (Vanderlinden et al.; Holzer et al.). Yeong-hye, a victim of her father's wrath, "merely absorb[ed] all her suffering inside her, deep into the marrow of her bones" (Kang 89). Her resistance to violence of any kind develops into anorexia. In an interview, Han Kang presents Yeong-hye's character as someone who "rejects an omnipresent and precarious violence even at a cost to herself" (qtd. in Lee 64). The slitting of her wrist exemplifies Yeong-hye's attempt at releasing herself from the inherent violence in the act of eating. In her attempt to detangle herself from violence, she becomes an 'other' at the expense of her own death (Kristeva 3). Yeong-hye's series of dreams symbolize her repressed childhood trauma induced by childhood violence.

Her first dream haunts her with images of blood, and she is unable to escape from it; it fills her with a feeling of uncanny. According to Friedrich Schelling, the uncanny is a consequence of a repressed trauma where the subject is at once familiar yet unfamiliar with the repressed object (qtd. in Henderson 135). The next dream has blood seeping out of Yeong-hye's finger, and she sees the face reflected in the blood. The imagery of blood and violence continues throughout her series of dreams. In another dream, Yeong-hye realizes her "mask is coming off [and she is] coming face-to-face with the thing that has always been here" (Kang 22). This confrontation is her confrontation with violence and its accompanying trauma that she has repressed. Yeong-hye sees an affinity between herself and the animals, both victims of the violent nature of a culture that normalizes everyday violence. The treatment meted out to the dog that bit Yeong-hye resonates with the beatings her father gave her as a child. Her father killed the dog ruthlessly and later feasted on its meat as a blatant display of masculinity and virility. Han Kang portrays Yeong-hye's father as a hyper-masculine figure who was a war veteran and the source of her trauma. In a society where women have no control over their bodies, anorexia presents itself as an opportunity to gain control over their

bodies and narratives (Leder 93). Culture tutors women to be docile bodies, and Susan Bordo points out how women come to perceive their bodies as alien. Similarly, Yeong-hye uses her body as a medium to repudiate what society forces her to be and take control of her narrative. Her anorexia also resonates with this claim that anorexia is a feminist protest against the male-dominated society (Bordo 156).

Anorexia, as a disorder that affects the female body, needs to be read in conjunction with the concept of abjection since female bodies are often turned into an abject to maintain male dominance. An abject is something that cannot be contained within a self and needs to be discarded. Abjects, such as Yeong-hye, are traditionally excluded from society.

Abjection

Julia Kristeva has extensively studied the abject. According to her,

> The abject is not an ob-ject facing me, which I name or imagine. Nor is it an ob-jest, an otherness ceaselessly fleeing in a systematic quest of desire. What is abject is not my correlative, which, providing me with someone or something else as support, would allow me to be more or less detached and autonomous. The abject has only one quality of the object—that of being opposed to I… It lies outside, beyond the set, and does not seem to agree to the latter's rules of the game. And yet, from its place of banishment, the abject does not cease challenging its master. Without a sign (for him), it beseeches a discharge, a convulsion, a crying out. To each ego its object, to each superego its abject. (1-2)

When food becomes abject for Yeong-hye, she is rendered into an abject herself—"It is no longer I who expel, 'I' is expelled" (4). She also becomes the object of disgust that repulses and attracts at once. Cheong "didn't want to reach out to [Yeong-hye] with words" and could not "conceal a feeling of abhorrence" towards her (Kang 12, 24). Kang reiterates Yeong-hye's position as an object of disgust. Cheong experiences "an intense feeling of disgust" when he thinks of Yeong-hye. At his office dinner party, Yeong-hye is continuously frowned upon for her choice of giving up meat. The guests point out how "meat eating is a fundamental human instinct" (20). This demonstrates how ingrained meat-eating is in Korean culture and how going against it equates to refuting the cultural codes and destroying the harmony of the community. This dinner also culminates with the guests ignoring Yeong-hye and "want[ing] to keep a distance between us" (21). This treatment portrays how Yeong-hye is no longer a part of Korean society but an abject that needs to be kept at a distance to preserve the social fabric of society. The status of an abject further makes her vulnerable, as she becomes a victim of sexual assault and disgust. Yeong-hye, raped by Cheong and her brother-in-law, is a victim of exploitation by men. After coitus, the question that Yeong-hye asks is, "will the dreams stop now?" (68). Her query is indicative of her fragile mental health and vulnerability. Yeong-hye's family disowns her because she violates cultural codes. She is continuously made an abject and is an object of others' disgust, and this reveals more about the culture and its functioning, than about the object of disgust (Tyler 23).

Yeong-hye's institutionalization is a result of her nakedness rather than her deteriorating physical and mental health. Cheong continually refers to Yeong-hye's deteriorating physical health. However, he is worried about what society would think of her and by extension, him. He comments on how "she grew thinner by the day" and how her "body resembled nothing so much as the skeletal frame of an invalid" (Kang 16, 17). When Yeong-hye slits her wrist, she is admitted to the hospital and "remove[s] her hospital gown and place[s] it on her knees, leaving her gaunt collarbones, emaciated breasts and brown nipples completely exposed" (34). Her nakedness induces her family to institutionalize her and also evokes disfavorable reactions from people around her. People assume Yeong-hye belongs to the psychiatric ward and is mentally ill. This makes her triply vulnerable: she is a woman who is not only the object of disgust, but also an object that lacks any sanity and needs to be taken care of in a way that society deems fit. The

mentally ill in contemporary times are feared since they threaten the stability of society and are a part of the 'waste population' who are "included through their exclusion" (Tyler 20). Yeong-hye is a part of this waste population and is rendered into an abject, and she exemplifies the treatment meted out to deviant people.

Disgust, Culture, and Body

Since gender is culturally and socially constructed, and plays a key role in the treatment of an individual by society, the body becomes a site through which society decides gender. Therefore, Yeong-hye exhibits disgust towards her own body. This is illustrated by her aspiration to become a plant, which is propelled by a culture of violence where women tend to be victims. Han Kang finds violence in "eating meat, cooking meat… a violence that has been normalized" (qtd. in Lee 64). It is this violence that makes Yeong-hye want to repudiate her animal origins and attain a vegetal state. Food is associated with violence, and making food has been perceived to be analogous to warlike customs (Adams 48).

Yeong-hye's disgust with the human body is a result of her disgust with a culture that normalizes violence against women and animals. Her anorexia is a result of her desire to become plant-like, and her aversion to meat-eating gradually transforms into an aversion towards food. Yeong-hye lets her brother-in-law paint flowers over her body so she can be like a flower. She remarks how the painting keeps her dreams at bay and prevents the congested feeling in her chest. Yeong-hye's affinity for sunlight is made clear throughout the novel and resonates with the need for sunlight for plants. Her desire to escape the animal world is congruent with the development of her anorexia. After her diagnosis, she tells In-hye, her sister, that she is "not an animal anymore… All [she] need[s] is sunlight" (Kang 87). Yeong-hye's disgust towards the human body culminates in anorexia and schizophrenia. The doctors fail to recognize that the reason behind Yeong-hye's paranoia could be "perceived contamination," where a person feels contaminated viz-a-viz some contact with an object that is contaminated (Powell et al. 134).

Han Kang emphasizes the resemblance between Yeong-hye and plants in the text. Yeong-hye's Mongolian mark is "more vegetal than sexual" (Kang 51). Her renunciation of the life represented by her body is also made clear by Han Kang. In-hye's dream about Yeong-hye also portrays her as a tree. This series of events is indicative of the other characters' appraisal of Yeong-hye as a plant rather than a human. Her anorexia is a consequence of her disgust towards the human body, which is capable of inflicting violence without realizing it.[17] Yeong-hye's disgust towards her body and her subsequent lapse into anorexia frees her from the shackles of the society that seeks to dictate women and their lives. In-hye realizes that Yeong-hye has moved beyond societal restraints through her anorexia and sacrifice of the human body. However, she remains a "prisoner" in the patriarchal culture and continues to suffer. In-hye's realization reflects the South Korean culture, where women are never pure since their experience is influenced by the patriarchal symbolic order (Kim 4). The novel ends with Yeong-hye being shifted to a general hospital, and In-hye's revelation that she has dreams too and her son, Ji-woo, is the only reason she does not give in to her dreams. She also marks the importance of waking up from dreams in order to continue living in society.

Conclusions

In conclusion, Yeong-hye's sufferings are a product of South Korean culture that is at play. She exemplifies the experiences of women in a society where they are required to uphold cultural norms.

[17] Anorexia is a form of violence against the body. Yeong-hye unintentionally unleashes this violence onto herself due to societal norms.

Yeong-hye's anorexia is a consequence of the hierarchical nature of society that expects women to submit to men who exercise violence. The violence is ingrained and repressed as trauma and finds its manifestation in the form of a series of dreams. The culture works to produce disgust towards meat-eating in Yeong-hye. Although the dominant culture supports meat-eating, she refrains from participating in it and hence is pushed out of society and no longer regarded as a member of society.

Yeong-hye's transgression sets her apart from the other women in the novel, and her disgust towards meat metamorphosis into disgust towards food. This transgression is demonstrative of the role that culture plays in eating disorders. Medicine relies heavily on bodily symptoms and either does not understand or refuses to acknowledge the role of culture in diseases and self-harming actions, especially for women. The failure of the doctors at the hospital to recognize Yeong-hye's anorexia as a result of the South Korean culture is demonstrative of this refusal to acknowledge the role of cultures in diseases and disorders where violence is carried out against the self, signifying society's omission of the deviant population that can threaten the existing power structure. Anorexia is often interpreted as a disease where women renounce their femininity and the accompanying gender expectations. However, Yeong-hye's anorexia shows the intersection between a culture that propagates violence through patriarchy, and meat-eating. Yeong-hye is at the periphery of society and elicits reactions of disgust from the other functioning members of the community and is ostracized. This reaction highlights that disgust is a social construct with those in power defining 'normal.' *The Vegetarian* brings attention to the working of a culture that suppresses women and subjects them to violence. The trauma experienced by women in everyday life has lingering effects that are put forth by Han Kang. *The Vegetarian* also shows the importance of meat-eating in South Korean society and how vegetarianism is 'unnatural.' Through the portrayal of Yeong-hye's character, Kang integrates Korean culture into twenty-first-century South Korean fiction. *The Vegetarian* interrogates the construction of disgust in a given culture and its effects on eating disorders in women.

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Craig Czury's Volume of Prose Poetry, *Fifteen Stones,* as a Site of Resistance against the Neoliberal Consensus

Abstract: The present article brings to the attention of European readers and literary criticism the volume of prose poetry *Fifteen Stones* (2015) of the contemporary North American poet Craig Czury. Even though Craig Czury is the author of more than twenty books, many of them being translated into Albanian, Russian, Croatian, Lithuanian, Spanish, and Italian, there is very little literary criticism in relation to his works, particularly in Europe. Our analysis demonstrates that the controversial nature of prose poetry allows Craig Czury to create his poetical sites of resistance against the contemporary neoliberal consensus. Most of the prose poems included in the volume have the form of monologues, bearing a marked autobiographical character, revealing personal life experiences, sometimes traumatic ones, and carrying us into the vast geographical and cultural spaces the poet has travelled to, but also into surrealist scenarios of his imagination.

Keywords: prose, poetry, language, reference, neoliberalism, consensus

Introduction

*Prose Poetry, a Controversial Literary Genre

In the history of literary criticism, prose poetry has been a controversial genre, since "the oxymoronic name captures the complex nature of a beast bred to challenge conventional assumptions about what poetry is and what it can do" (Clements and Dunham). Sometimes it has been considered as a hybrid genre, a fusion of poetry and prose, and in more extreme cases, as a separate genre altogether, which nevertheless combines elements of the two: with poetry it shares symbols, metaphors, what we generally label as "figures of speech," whereas with prose, its association with a narrative frame. When it comes to the European poetic tradition, the German Romantics (Novalis, Hoelderlin, Heine) are generally considered the forerunners of the prose poem, as it evolved in Europe, whereas in North-American literature, the prose poem was not immediately recognized and embraced by the poets or by the public as a literary genre. Only in the modernist period did the idea of writing poetry in prose gain some impetus under the influence of the French symbolists, especially Baudelaire, Rimbaud and Mallarmé (Acquisto 20). Yet, prose poetry as such was not widely accepted in the United States of America. Not by chance did Gertrude Stein spend most of her life and created most of her work in Europe, particularly in France. Even though between 1910 and 1930 the majority of the prose poems was published in journals and anthologies among verse poems, Stein's volume *Tender Buttons* (1914) was among the few collections of poetry which comprised only prose poems. Slowly, the narrative frame became almost a necessity especially with the American poets of the 1950s and 1960s such as Allen Ginsberg, Bob Dylan, Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs, Russel Edson, and Charles Simic, to name just a few, in their attempt to experiment further with this literary genre. According to Steven Monte, the current revival of interest in prose poetry in the USA is mainly due to one poet, John Ashbery, particularly to one of his works, *Three poems* (1972). Considering Ashbery's influence on other American poets, as well as the considerable amount of academic literary criticism his prose poems received makes Monte conclude that, "Ashbery's

work may mark the moment when the prose poem enters a tradition on whose margins has stood for a long time" (Monte 9).

***Prose Poetry as Language Poetry and a Site of Resistance against Neoliberal Referentiality and Language Commodification**

When confronted with the infinitely diverse field of contemporary North American poetry, it is almost impossible to establish coherent narratives. Literary criticism today in the USA attempts to divide this field into two schools: an experimental, avant-garde poetry, most prominently that of the language school, and the poetic mainstream, often criticized for its frequent misidentification of poetry with self-expression. While for Hank Lazer, experimental, language-oriented poetry constitutes "innovative, and thus truly revolutionary or transgressive, contemporary writing" (86), Jennifer Ashton claims that "lyric and anti-lyric poetries alike have remained committed to the liberal (and now neoliberal) value of self-expression" (219). This kind of division appears to foreground the classical division between form and content, as well as to account for various contemporary poetries, which, whether emerging in an academic or extra-academic context, affiliate themselves with, and define their imagination through emergent social and political movements.

Language poetry is considered to be a postmodern school widely construed as self-referential. It followed modernism, surrealism, Black Mountain and New York School, getting shaped in opposition to the main institutions of American poetry. Even though it originated in the San Francisco Bay Area in the early 1970s, only by the mid-1990s had "language writing" become a widely accepted term, many language poets agreeing that "there was never any self-consciously organized group known as language writers or poets—not even a fixed name" (Perelman 12). That is probably the reason why language poets do not share a manifesto, their poetry having in common an outright dismissal of self-expressive mainstream poetics and an interest in formal experimentation, which in their work directly relates to the problem of reference. In this respect, language writing has widely been looked upon as a literary practice disconnected from reality, overtly self-descriptive and self-referential in character. Albena Lutzkanova-Vassileva described it as "a literary enterprise precluding our link with history, an exercise in pure language denying access to specific socio-historical realities" (103). Consequently, this anti-referential poetry becomes a tool for fighting the instrumental discourse of late capitalist society and undermining the commodification of both life and language. Language poetry is thus not just a new poetical experiment that goes against the dominant institutions of the American poetry, but also a powerful critique of U.S. imperialism and capitalism in general. At the heart of this social critique and the non-referentialist agenda of the language poets lies the belief that the referent is a linguistic analogue to commodity fetishism: "The primary impact on language, and language arts, of the rise of capitalism has been in the area of reference and is directly related to the phenomena known as the commodity fetish" (Silliman 122).

More than that, in neoliberalism, culture and language are directly connected to politics and subjection as ideology. Thus, they are considered to support the formation of appropriate identities and forms of subjectivity. Along Foulcauldian lines, power is conceived as discursive power (Foucault). Once neoliberalism is understood as a matter of discursive power, culture assumes a clear role in the construction and expansion of the necessary discursive structures. In contemporary literature, one aspect associated with discursive approaches to power is the narrative—the narration of the economy as found in stories of corporate power and advertising scripts, where the narration works a cultural template of what it takes to become powerful. The other aspect is the formation of 'economic subjects' who have been configured to perform in, and understand particular modes of discipline, subjects that are both subjects to particular discourses and creators of them.

Methodology

The present article analyzes the poems included in the volume *Fifteen Stones* (2015) by the North-American poet Craig Czury from the critical perspective of neoliberalism in relation to culture, in general and literature, in particular. Within such a framework of interpretation, culture is "frequently discussed as either a way to make legible important aspects of neoliberalism or as an instrument of neoliberalism that supports the formation of appropriate identities and forms of subjectivity" (Nilges 165). In contemporary cultural critique, there is a huge amount of literature, particularly in the form of essays, discussing neoliberalism, analyzing the work of particular authors, the effects of specific sociopolitical developments, the connection between neoliberalism and feminism, between neoliberalism and technological development, and so on. Since the term neoliberalism itself, particularly in connection to culture, expresses a relation that we can only conceive as a process, as fluid and historically changing, our methodology does not aim at generating universal definitions. On the contrary, our aim is to demonstrate how particular cases and literary works like the volume of prose poetry *Fifteen Stones* may contribute to our understanding of the connection, and at the same time disconnection, between literary products and neoliberalism, since the analysis may go both ways. This article will discuss the resistance of these narrative poems to the big narrative frames, such as the child's psychological development in relation to the parents, the traumatic cultural adjustment of the migrant child to the culture of the majority, the USA—the land of opportunities for many generations of immigrants, for others a huge disappointment—, traumatic moments in the history of the USA, such as the Cold War and its aftermath, and so on.

In addition, using the taxonomy proposed by Clements and Dunham in "An Introduction to the Prose Poem," most of the prose poems in *Fifteen Stones* (2015) take the form of monologues that may or may not be directed to a specific audience. They reveal insights into the (dis)connected images the poet has of himself: "Who I am. Who I used to be. Who I'm supposed to be. Who I think I am. Who I never got caught as" (35). Nevertheless, we may also come across dialogue or even epistolary prose poems in which there are many instances of code-switching and mixture of registers, suggesting that Craig Czury also looks for other cultural discourses as models for his prose poems. All these sub-genres existing in the volume of *Fifteen Stones* and discussed in our analysis come to demonstrate that the prose poem is a consolidated literary genre in contemporary Northern American poetry.

Debunking Myths

The complex nature of prose poetry, as well as the above-stated controversy lying at the heart of contemporary American literary criticism, are reflected by the multi-dimensional prose poetry collected in Czury's volume. By choosing to write in this literary genre, it becomes clear that he is open to experimenting with this form, which appears to be the most suitable for conveying, just like in Stein's case, the rhythms of experience of his immigrant family in the USA, an experience that the poet also sees in reverse: one day the immigrants may go back to their native country for exactly the same reasons, a scenario which common readers never think of:

> Religious, political, economic reasons my grandparents got on the boat to come to America could just be the same reasons to get back on that boat and go back. The courage or desperation in one lifetime to leave everything for an imagined better something something …Twenty-five years ago, from Mexico, I saw America as the light from a star long since burnt out. (23)

The prose poems are organized in four sections, each section having its own title ("News from Soncino," "√ poetry: 5x5," "Chile notes," and "Click"*)*. The titles sometimes contain symbols whose meanings are hinted at in the poems, lacking titles, included in that particular section. All the poems included in the four sections resist any neoliberal narrative frame, resembling more "a finely-structured sequence of non-linear

thoughts" (Zingone 7). Furthermore, they take us back to childhood, presumably Craig Czury's childhood, and even to the playground: "looking for a game since a kid. Looking for a moment. A way to fit in" (18). The immigrant child, as well as the adult later on, appears to be continuously out of sync. The Oedipal complex is debunked using various hints spread in some of the poems suggesting a traumatized childhood, a problematic relationship to his (probably sick) mother, as well as to his aggressive father. Using a flash-back, one of the poems evokes a childhood memory from school, when the art teacher asks him to draw a picture of his house and family using chalk:

> Here's the outline of my mom spazzing out on the floor with a seizure… looks like she's at the stove stirring a brothy cacciatore. Here's my chalk line dad chasing me through the house with a leather strap… looks like he's fly fishing. The chalk outline of me sneaking out of my bedroom window at night is me climbing the wall. (21)

In another poem, the Oedipal complex appears to be solved ironically only after his parents' deaths and after a specific amount of time has passed: "Next year I will live one second past my father's death and become a proper noun. In twelve more, I'll outlive my mom and start having kids" (30). Nevertheless, even long after her death, the mother figure is still haunting him like an obsession: "Besides, 5/5 is my mother's birthday and we're back at it again arguing over the amount of times I ran away from home against the amount of times she threw me out. Even though she's been dead for decades, she always gets the last word in …" (40). Surprisingly, later on, in section "5x5," one of the poems complicates even more dramatically the scenario of the Oedipus triangle. It starts with a powerful confession which brings to the fore the idea that he has been abandoned by his biological mother, in connection to whom he ironically identifies himself as "the dangling modifier": "I found the woman who gave birth to me when I was 39. Me, the dangling modifier" (59). In terms of identity, being "a dangling modifier," which also implies not being clearly and logically related to the biological mother, appears in direct opposition to the no longer relevant Freudian Ego.

Time and Memory

Just like Stein, but also echoing the Ezra Pound of *The Pisan Cantos* (1948), Craig Czury appears to be obsessed with the rhythmical tropes of memory and its connection to the passage of time: "Memory has no chronology," he claims (22). This is why memory comes out in bits and pieces, fragmented or by means of free association: the picture of an old woman triggers the dream about the old woman bearing a striking resemblance to his Hungarian grandmother, who died in a hospital crawling with ants, and who advised him to let her go and to stop writing about the dead. When it comes to the concept of time, we come across the stream of consciousness technique, by means of which everything is compressed, both traumatic and happy moments: "The clock at the train station in Skopje stopped with the earthquake at 5:17. We set the dead clock in your uncle's jacked-up Buick at our first time. And here, where I'm writing these up-ended time pieces, the clock's stuck in Bedouin trance beat 8:34" (21).

Czury's use of tense, particularly in his semi-autobiographical prose poems, appears to endorse Roman Jakobson's theory of time in poetry. For Jakobson, verbal language generally falls into two patterns of time perception: "on the one hand, the time of the speech event and on the other hand, the time of the narrated event. The clash of these two facets is particularly evident in verbal art" (21-22). The present tense, simple or continuous, seems to create a pattern of the continuous present, which has the effect of freezing time. Furthermore, present is also the time of the thought, and if thought is continuous, this is the best way to represent the continuous flux of thoughts. Past tense appears to play the role of setting the narrative frame for very personal, sometimes painful, traumatic experiences, but always appearing in flash-backs, in a fragmentary way, as in a puzzle. One of the implications of this technique seems to be

that we, as readers, are challenged to solve the puzzle. Nevertheless, the perception of the past is mixed with the knowledge of the present, and the past is never divorced from the present, on the contrary, past and present are closely connected, as if they are haunting each other: "Even though she's been dead for decades, she always gets the last word in, saying *I had to throw you out because you'd have only run away anyway"* (40).[18]

Sites of Resistance

In almost all of his prose poems, the poet identifies sites of resistance in which the production of a poetic subjectivity in opposition to the neoliberal consensus occurs or can potentially occur. The resistant (poetic) subjectivity appears to be expressed in rhetorical questions, filled with irony and even parody, as is the case of the following passage: "Who will become the poet? Who will become the auto mechanic? Who will become the teacher just to get even? The demolitions expert? The dog groomer? The cat burglar? Which one will make life so miserable for everyone that there will be long grudges and a lot of blood?" (31), and in reconsidering historical periods ("I'm a kid out of the late 50's 1960's Cold War doo wop"), in which poetic expression was connected to political activism and therefore fulfilled a social function.

It often seems that the poet's vision encompasses a social solidarity which engages particular areas of oppression and resistance in the hope for a larger coalition, shaping thus a global poetic subjectivity of the working/serving class: "The men I grew up among had no childhood (an American invention since WWII), they had coal mines, weaving mills, factories, wars" (37). This solidarity, however, does not confine itself to the American working class, but it extends itself to different institutional and cultural settings (in the US, Italy, Chile, all the vast geographical territory Craig Czury has travelled through and lived in until now) and even beyond, into a kind of alternative (metaphysical) world and existence, outside the prison/cage, whatever this prison/cage may stand for (i.e. the human condition and existence in which we are trapped, the culture(s) whose prisoners willy-nilly we are, the capitalist system(s) we live in, St. Elizabeth's fifty years after Pound, Pinochet's dictatorship, and the enumeration may go on forever): "It's not impossible, *qui e li e al di la*, to be here and to be there... all the way over there. The lifers know that it's we on the outside who are the ones in prison. For them, the walls have dissolved a long time ago" (26). In this context, it is impossible not to mention the poet's sense of solidarity, warmly confessed, with his fellow poets from Santiago de Chile, who survived both Neruda (looked upon as an authority, as "el Escritor") and Pinochet (the implied Censor/ Dictator):

> These guys are just like me, they lived it, they wrote about it... What a great camaraderie, humor and strength together in their laughing about things I'll never know about, but can read in their spirit. I like these guys. Except, I'm only here once and I really have to interject questions, because when I get home, my friends will sincerely want to know. What did you do to survive Pinochet? From researching their poems and from observation, they have clearly survived Neruda, but I have to ask, what did you do to survive those horrible years? (64)

If apparently laughter is the key of their resistance, it turns out that the true mode of their solidary resistance under inwardly and outwardly oppressive circumstances was their poetry/music: "The table winced in unison, but a cry came out from the musician. METAPHOR! The others exhaled. *We wrote in a parallel language. Pinochet made us greater! We wrote unlike the previous generation. There were a lot of metaphors in those years* (one of us blinked at that realization)*, a lot of poetry, a lot of music*" (64). This way Czury appears to initiate an international dialogue among the survivors of dictatorship, indirectly challenging us, turning the mirror on us, the readers, to take part in it, as if asking us the same question

[18] All italics in the quotations from Czury's poems are his.

(*What did you do or, hypothetically, what would you have done to survive a totalitarian regime...?)* It is not by chance that some editors have argued that the prose poem, as a literary genre, is subversive: "Most important for us to note, however, is that prose poetry was born in America as part of the underground. It was, and often still is, fiercely anti-establishment" (Wilson 8).

The instances of social, political resistance alternate with the psychological and linguistic resistance of the immigrant child who rejects the language of the majority, embracing poetry as a form of resistance itself: "I was already agitated and angry. Tones of voices, eyes, gestures. English wasn't my first language, it was the tone underneath the tones of broken English, like poetry, one of the best reasons I always got slapped pointing this out, who I thought I was" (37), as well as with personal confessions full of lyricism, similar to moments of post-modern epiphany: "The big surprise, as I got older, I got kinder. I cry at the stupidest human gesture. I fall madly in love with the woman who snorts when she laughs" (37).

The language of science, which is language of neoliberalism, is incomprehensible to the poet, who imagines a paradoxical and humorous alternative to it, that of speaking under the water: "I have a cousin who's a nuclear physicist. God knows what language he speaks. But when he's not splitting atoms, he scuba dives. Astonishing! Imagine what marvelous words he speaks under water" (63).

When venturing to imagine the sites of resistance as alternative worlds or modes of existence, the use of code-switching becomes almost a necessity, especially in "Chile notes": "La Casa del Escritor in Santiago…" (64); "I want to be the *jardinero laureado* of Iquique… And I want to water your cars so the *cuidadores de autos* have something to polish with their greasy rags…" (68); "And in the *sala de recibo* off the entrance, I left the breath of H's *Papeles de resurrection* and our winged poetry pamphlets *shhhh* between your books and where you and Matilda greeted guests, serving them espresso, pisco and tea" (72). The English-Spanish-English code-switching is employed at its best in "Jorge and I have..." (74), where both English and Spanish appear in turn, spoken by different subjectivities, as the languages of the Other, but surprisingly culminating with the old geezer's poetic advice which mixes the two languages, this time in a reconciling way: "*YANKY GO HOME. Pero llévame contigo"* (74).[19] At first sight "YANKY" appears to be used as a derisive and discriminative term (normally spelt "Yankee") for the U. S. American intruder, disturbing the natives in their home country with his aggressive swear words expressing his frustration caused by the late bus. Thus, the old man's urge could be interpreted as the Mexicans' hatred towards the U.S Americans and the U.S. interference with their internal affairs, and it is not by chance that it is uttered in English. The second sentence, uttered in Spanish, may be interpreted as the Mexicans' expression of their American Dream, as their wish to emigrate to the U.S., seen as the land of better opportunities and freedom, despite their disapproval of the way the United States have historically imposed themselves as an imperial power. Nevertheless, Czury never makes things easy for the readers—he always has something up his sleeve: without the readers' being aware of it, he introduces another connotation through the spelling of the word "YANKY." According to the definition provided by the *English Urban Dictionary*, "*Yanky* is the kind of guy you would always want to hang out with, maybe a little shy at first but once he opens up, you can see his great personality. *Yanky* is the guy that is always there for a friend…, *yanky* is someone you would feel confident to talk to…"[20] According to this new interpretation, the old man's words could be an appeal to the readers' return to poetry, as a realm where they can feel safe, at home, in tune with their feelings, and which can make use of all the linguistic resources, including puns, code switching or slang in order to create new meanings.

Some of the poems bring to the foreground the topics of the creative writer: the daydreamer, the poet and the creative writing process. The poet, after having found in poetry a refuge and a site of resistance

[19] But take me with you

[20] https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Yanky

against the major culture and its implied neoliberalism, explores the misunderstood profession of the writer, who, in the contemporary neoliberal context of the competitive market, is looked down upon as useless, good for nothing, by the pragmatic majority:

> I tell my students if you're going to be a writer, walk around with a hammer in your hand, wear a tool belt, carry a shovel or a flyswatter. To others, when they see us doing our most serious work, we look as if we're doing nothing. The punishment is severe. They will hand us a shovel, or a scrub brush or a vacuum cleaner. At least, now that my pen's active across the page, no one will bother me… (22)

The last sentence clearly suggests that the poet's ultimate refuge, no matter how brief, is writing. So there is no wonder that in the poem "It is not...," the concept of the "Poet in-residence" is under erasure, leaving only one possible alternative: the "Poet at large." Finally, in "Chile notes" the recurrent theme of the poet-daydreamer adds a new dimension, that of the filmmaker, comparing the process of writing poetry to that of creating a movie or even bringing it closer to nowadays' creative use of mobile phone cameras: "I am filming what I should be writing—said the poet who is now a filmmaker… The filmmaker shoots a live action selfie with the daydreamer's camera as he walks into the sea backwards" (66).

The prose poem "Imagine there are..." beautifully explains the process of creative writing from Czury's perspective, highlighting the heteroglossic, dialogic, but also interactive nature of poetry:

> For me, once I wade into any strand of words, something inside me immediately starts speaking back. That's when somebody else's words spark my words. Somebody else's story, sentence at a time, becomes huge openings for all of my stories. ...Your line sparks my opening line, and, after all gets said and written, your book turns into my book. Imagine there are people who actually wait for another to stop talking before they speak. (22)

Writing poetry becomes the only way in which "the foggy thoughts" become clear and may be articulated, in which the poet can untangle the everyday nonsense. So, writing turns into an escape from the (existential) "hangover": "I have another day, several days within one, waking with my foggy thoughts, drink coffee quietly to sort them out. It's the hangover I write myself out of, to fish whatever clarity swarms in the murk" (28). The dialogic nature of the prose poems is also obvious when they address us, the readers, directly, demolishing any walls that may be existing in between: "I'll be writing you always from this distance, this smoky light of observation, memory, and unresolved grief. You stuck around, I stuck around as long as we could according to my DNA..." One cannot speak about heteroglossia in Czury's poetry without considering the inner voice(s) hidden "under how many layers" he brings to the light, from his "dissonant cage." Interestingly enough, in a surrealistic scenario, these voices, not only echo Ezra Pound's *dramatis personae*, but they also enter a dialogue with the poet. As if reincarnated in Pound himself, in St Elizabeth's, fifty years later, he is addressed by the doctor, who accounts for humans' mental insanity as a lack of certain chemicals inside the human brain. In a way, these voices tell us what really is the prose poem to Czury—it is the hypertext, both at a formal and structural level. Even though the prose poems are grouped in sections each having probably a particular meaning for the author, they may be read in any order the reader chooses. More than that, each prose poem contains a story, which structurally and semantically represents a lexia, but which hides within its text many other lexias, i.e. many other stories and stories within stories, engaging the reader to participate in the construction of their own texts, in an endless process of semiosis.

Conclusions

After being kept at the margins of traditional poetry for a long time, in contemporary North American literature prose poetry becomes a multi-dimensional literary genre which serves best the contemporary poet's need to experiment even more both in terms of its form and content. In this respect, the volume may be considered as a kind of a return to the beginnings of prose poetry in the USA, as an indirect homage to Gertrude Stein and particularly Ezra Pound, who have opened up in American poetry new possibilities of expression through their prose poems. Even though most of the prose poems in *Fifteen Stones* have a marked autobiographical character, it is exactly because of that that they open a dialogue with the readers at a very profound human level, challenging them to imagine themselves in similar life situations: immigrating to a new country, adjusting to a new culture, growing up in a traumatic domestic, social, political environment, living in a totalitarian regime, finding refuge in writing poetry, travelling to other countries, refusing to comply with the neoliberal consensus.

In the era of high technology and digitalization, the prose poem becomes a suitable form for creative writing in the virtual environment: it becomes the hypertext which, through its inherent narrative structure and interactive nature, may enclose an endless number of stories, taking the reader to an endless number of virtual sites. This demonstrates that over the time the prose poem sub-genres are changing, evolving into something else, sometimes looking for models into other cultural discourses.

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Embodiment of American Virtue, Embodiment of Corporate Interest? – Michael Jordan's Public Persona and Its Historical Roots

Abstract: In professional sports physicality is closely connected to an omnipresent capitalist logic. Therefore, professional sports constitute an arena in which bodies are produced, serve as revenue increasing entities, and are ultimately consumed. By taking a closer look at the National Basketball Association's (NBA) as well as affiliated companies' narratological marketing efforts, this paper tries to identify dominant narratives. The NBA constitutes a particularly interesting case, as a racial component highlights the (un)conscious decisions made by corporate leaders. This racial division in fans and athletes could not be bridged for a long time and made the league financially unsuccessful. This changed with David Stern's tenure as commissioner. Theoretically, this paper draws on Stanley Deetz's (1992) concept of "corporate colonization" which implies that, in the act of making sense of the world, interpretations which primarily consider efficiency and/or revenue aspects are selected over other possibilities. This paper highlights the selected modes of (re-)presentation by looking at one of the sport's most recognizable icons, Michael Jordan.

Keywords: basketball, NBA, race, Michael Jordan, corporate colonization, history of basketball, North America

Introduction

1984 marks a pivotal year for the National Basketball Association (NBA) as David Stern took over as the league's commissioner. Prior to Stern's term, the league had been perceived as "[…] drug-infested and too-black […]" (Kiersh 28) by sponsors and audiences alike, which explains the NBA not operating financially profitably at the time. B'beri and Hogarth (cf. 91) identified the gulf between the mostly White viewership and the predominantly Black athletes as a key contributor to the league's unfortunate situation. On the contrary, the newly appointed commissioner Stern was convinced that "[…] race would not be an abiding issue to NBA fans, at least as long as it was handled correctly" (Maharaj 231) and within the first ten years of Stern's service the NBA experienced 1600% in growth (cf. Maharaj 232). However, the NBA's stellar economic success directs attention to Stern's—and with him the NBA's—attempts of handling race *correctly*. The field of professional sports is of particular interest for questions and modes of (racial) representation, as multiple dimensions or perspectives (and with them diverging logics) intersect. First and foremost, the sport of basketball is considered "a bastion of fair play and equal opportunity" (B'Beri and Hogarth 90). Perspectives on professional sports primarily emphasizing meritocracy often come along with demands that "politics should be kept out of sport" (MacClancy 2). While the actual game of basketball is undoubtedly meritocratic in nature, professional sports leagues—such as the NBA—are also embedded into a system of mass media (cf. Stichweh) and, as such, also follow the logics of commerce and business (cf. Wollert 75). This has far-reaching consequences, as players make it into the league based on meritocratic grounds; however, their physical performances are being promoted, advertised, and then

sold in market settings which encompass media stations, merchandise producers, and many more. As such, it can be argued that the athletes' bodies are presented in ways most compatible with consumer society (cf. Thomas and Neuhaus 132-154). In the case of the NBA, the most urgent issue—as identified by the corporate leaders—was the issue of race with the majority of (financially well-equipped) fans being White whereas the majority of players were Black. Ergo, through the intertwinement of basketball and business, dynamics concerning Black bodies as well as representation(s) thereof have been touched upon as the NBA attempted to make "Black men safe for (White) consumers in the interest of profit" (Hughes 164).

As the rules of the (meritocratic) game of basketball have to be, per definition, the same for all players, a corporate-driven regimen of "surveillance and regulation" (Leonard 160) manifests itself along the lines of "seemingly innocent decisions, league administrations, and fan discourse" (cf. B'beri and Hogarth 91), as well as on- and off-court punishments (cf. Lavelle "A Critical Discourse" 298; cf. Cunningham 40) which pressure "Black players to conform to the moral and ethical economy of the professional sports leagues" (B'beri and Hogarth 91).[21] In other words: "Sports and sporting events cannot be comprehended without reference to relations of power" (MacClancy 5) and the trespassing of rules as well as the penalization thereof can be read as "power-plays between the White managerial forces and Black athletes" (Cunningham 40). Regarding the NBA, these power plays are closely linked to athletes as well as their physical performance and appearance. Thereby, regulations primarily target bodies and regulate them along the lines of corporate interest—a phenomenon which could be referred to as "corporate colonization" (Deetz).[22] The aforementioned dimensions and underlying (racial) dynamics make the NBA "a contested discoursive space" (Andrews and Silk 1627) in which the "ongoing battle over representation of Black urban experience is fought" (Kelly 8). Simultaneously, the NBA produces "sanitized snapshots that promote integration without equality, representation without power, [and] presence without the conforming possibility of emancipation" (McDonald 248); snapshots which need to be contextualized, analyzed, and critically interrogated.

1984 also marks a pivotal year for the NBA as one of its biggest stars, Michael Jordan, was drafted by the Chicago Bulls and thereby entered the league. Much of the NBA's success, as well as Jordan's main sponsor Nike, can be attributed to the performance of *His Airness*. Michael Jordan's persona has been stylized as the "embodiment of American virtue" (Naughton 154). However, following the logic of

[21] The latest controversy around the NBA's refereeing scandal can be read in similar fashion. Individual referees were accused of being involved in betting schemes and fixing games—a clear violation of the meritocratic spirit of the game. In the course of investigation, it turned out that the NBA itself was—at least passively (through neglect as well as accommodating fixture)—involved in these activities as certain settings (i.e. a game 7 in a playoff series) came with tremendous financial advantages which were produced by the (allegedly rogue) referees in question (cf. Walley).

[22] Corporate colonization starts with the assumptions that the world could be interpreted in a plethora of ways; however, "major national and international corporations have frequently, wittingly and unwittingly, replaced religious, familial, educational, and community institutions in the production of meaning, personal identity, values, knowledge, and reasoning" (Deetz 17). While the NBA can be considered a crucial actor in colonizing Black bodies by shaping and presenting them in their (corporate) interest, corporate colonization is less about individual actors as it focuses on the overarching—and in part shared—narrative which can be perpetuated by multiple (corporate) actors. In the case of the professional basketball, the NBA, sneaker producers, media stations, and merchandise/clothing manufacturers have also contributed to the representation, norms, and ideals of Black athletes. This can be considered problematic insofar as these "colonizing activities prevent, preclude, or render unimportant the multiplicity of ways of being and knowing inherent to the human experience" (McClellan 1) or, in other words, corporate colonization artificially narrows down the discourse on, as well as the representation and embodiment of, Blackness and Black bodies, as it overemphasizes the interpretations which are most compatible with economic interest.

corporate colonization, it can be assumed that this illustration is selective at best as—even though the league is usually "not running away from associations with urban culture but marketing them to death" (Zirin, *Welcome* 108), Jordan has actively been kept at distance from stereotypical images, presentations, or advertisements which could support associations with Black urban America (cf. Andrews and Silk 1629). When being asked, in 1990, why he does not use his platform to promote political issues, Michael Jordan famously replied that "Republicans buy sneakers, too" (Zirin, *People* 238)—a clear depoliticization of professional sports (cf. Rorke and Copeland 89) which can be read as a statement in and of itself, as well as an expression of the time. Taking these observations as a starting point, it can be argued that the public persona of Michael Jordan can be considered the product of an economically motivated and sophisticated campaign; a campaign which implicitly, as well as explicitly, refers to and interacts with the (racial) history of professional basketball, (consumer) society, corporate interest, and a plethora of other factors.[23] As such, the invoked image of Michael Jordan as an embodiment of consumer-favorable values and associations will be contextualized, analyzed, and critically interrogated as a historically-grown snapshot of the intertwined areas outlined above. In order to understand the multiple facets which constitute Michael Jordan—as a highly successful example of a fabricated body and representative for large parts of the sports world—, this paper will do the following things: firstly, it will outline the history of (professional) basketball from its days of creation to 1984. As race has been a crucial aspect of professional sports, and basketball in particular, this historical recap will dedicate special attention to racial aspects in the world of basketball. After having discussed the pre-Stern history of basketball, this paper will take a closer look at the activities perpetuated during the Stern era. Therefore, the first section will discuss the illustration and marketing efforts around the two stars/teams which preceded Michael Jordan, namely Erving *Magic* Johnson (Los Angeles Lakers) and Larry Bird (Boston Celtics). In order to highlight Stern's approach of handling race *correctly*, the images of Johnson and Bird—both were in the league prior to Stern—will be contrasted with Michael Jordan's representation, as Jordan was the first (and arguably most successful) star player during the Stern era.[24] At the end of this paper, key aspects will be summarized, implications thereof will be discussed, and outlooks for potential future research will be presented.

Basketball's Early Days (1891 to 1980)

Originally imagined as a pastime during the winter season, James Naismith pioneered basketball in 1891 (cf. Sahre and Pommerening 168). The sport of basketball rapidly amassed a following especially within the networks of colleges and YMCAs. Consequently, in 1898, the first professional basketball leagues were organized, followed by an initial international tournament in 1919 (cf. Kränzle and Brinke

[23] Cultural embeddedness—combined with a critical reading of power structures within these cultural settings—of individuals, creative works, narratives, and the like is also a key constituent of the theory of "New Historicism" (cf. Gallagher and Greenblatt) from which this paper has benefitted tremendously.

[24] Even though Stern's as well as the NBA's influence on individual campaigns and illustrations cannot be reconstructed and/or proven entirely, some instances shed light on the league's and the commissioner's executive power (over players). One such instance is the *Malice-in-the-Palace* brawl in 2005. After the infamous altercation which affected viewership by roughly 20% (cf. Lorenz and Murray 29), Stern implemented a dress code as well as educational programs and changed the league's fining structures—all being measures which effectively regulate athletes. Basketball observers noticed that from 2005 on, Stern "treated the players like children" (Cohen). Taking this observation as a starting point, it can be assumed that Stern's as well as the NBA's contribution to the representation of players, teams, and the NBA's final product is (and has always been) rather extensive. This ties in with scholarly observers who argue that the NBA makes Black players and bodies—on as well as off-court—productive by submitting them to primarily White leadership, such as coaches, referees, or managerial forces (cf. Ferber 20, 21).

52). However, no league was able to ingrain itself indelibly, rendering the National Basketball League (NBL)[25]—which in 1948/49 was merged with nowadays NBA, after having entertained audiences since 1937—the first fruitful league of the time (cf. Kränzle and Brinke 72). Consequently, certain teams outlasted leagues in the early days. The New York Renaissance and Harlem Globetrotters, the second being brought to life by the Jewish entrepreneur Abe Saperstein in 1926 (cf. Kränzle and Brinke 72), were able to capitalize and gained permanent fame. They did so by embracing and showcasing Black players, who otherwise were kept out of professional sports. In 1946, the NBA entered the scene as the Basketball Association of America (BAA), but incorporated the National Basketball League (NBL) and hence rebranded itself in 1948/49 (cf. Kränzle and Brinke 73). While the NBL had the bigger stars on their rosters, the BAA's advantage was that it played in the bigger cities and stadiums, developing larger markets from an earlier point onwards.

After Black players were granted the right to participate in the NBA in 1950, the Harlem Globetrotters shifted their predominant focus towards theatrics and showcasing American values during Cold War times (cf. Thomas 778). With a plethora of leagues fighting for supremacy within the landscape of basketball by signing the most competitive players and talents, the NBA managed to install itself at the pinnacle of power by harnessing superstar George Mikan and the Minneapolis Lakers in the 1950s (cf. Rader 271)—both were products of the NBL prior to the merger in 1948/49. In the following years, from 1957 to 1966, the Lakers' dominance was challenged by the Boston Celtics, who—powered by Bill Russel and Bob Cousy—won consecutive titles during that time (cf. Rader 271). Professional basketball experienced an expansion in clientele "from less than 2 million in 1960 to 10 million in the late 1970s" (Rader 272) by implementing numerous rule changes and flooding the league with exhilarating and inspiring talents and teams. But with significant progress and possibility comes corresponding competition, namely the American Basketball Association (ABA). The ABA gained relevance by dissociating itself from the still predominantly White NBA, which during those days prided itself on now Hall of Famers Jerry *The Logo* West[26] or *Pistol* Pete Maravich amongst others. Therefore, an implicit segregation along racial lines emerged within basketball in the late 1950s and early 1960s (cf. Eitzen and Yetman 333). The ABA served as the predominantly Black counterpart to the NBA and established Julius Erving as its flagship (cf. Criblez 374). After having been in business for nine years, the ABA was ultimately incorporated into the NBA. With Black players now eclipsing White players in numbers, the 1970s signal a peripeteia in the NBA's history as salaries skyrocketed concurrently. A plausible explanation for the increase in salary is the materialization of public interest combined with the two leagues clashing contentiously. The ABA grabbed the shorter end of the stick and ended up going insolvent.

With the Civil Rights Movement going on concomitantly and Black players gaining a public platform, the Black Power Movement and its more belligerent division rose to perceptibility. Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, whose original name was Lew Alcindor, emanated as these development's prominent paradigm. Thus, the 1970s have been labeled an "[…] era of Black power and White backlash" (Goudsouzian 2), a circumstance that did not leave basketball untouched. Fueled by numerous misdemeanors of Black players, the White backlash expressed itself through dropping (audience) ratings, leading to an NBA image crisis in the late 1970s and early 1980s (cf. Cady 15). This trend got to a point where "[m]any advertisers saw the NBA as a drug-infested, too-Black league with dwarfish Nielsen ratings" (Kiersh 28). Not only the league itself but

[25] The NBL was originally founded by three companies from the Great Lake area (Goodyear, General Electric, and Firestone) and featured independent as well as company sponsored teams. Back then, the competitiveness of a league was (in part) determined by their performance in general tournaments, such as the *World Professional Basketball Tournament* where teams from the NBL won 7 times (out of 10 contests).

[26] Jerry West was not only a very successful basketball player but also the template for today's NBA's brand logo. This coincidence brought him the nickname Jerry *The Logo* West.

also the associated franchises suffered severe economic consequences, rendering 16 out of 23 teams not profitable in 1983/84 (cf. Nick 79). The aforementioned representational dilemma is a consistent area of tension within NBA history as "the NBA faithfully mirrors the tensions between 'Blackophilia' and 'Blackophobia' […]"[27] (Andrews and Silk 1627), which remains observable throughout the larger scheme of society. Due to David Stern taking over as NBA commissioner and metamorphosing it into a money-making machine, the year 1984 can be read as a turning point in the league's history. The following section will investigate how the NBA, as well as other corporate actors—represented primarily by commissioner Stern—proposed players to attract a larger and pecuniary more potent viewership. In other words: how did basketball-related corporations colonize (mostly) Black players, bodies, and expressions along the line of corporate revenue?

The David Stern Era

At the center of David Stern's endeavors for the league were consumer-friendliness and marketability. In order to achieve these maxims, Stern employed the idea of identification with particular brands and faces. These brands and faces are in terms of the NBA specific teams or players. Through identification, the audience's willingness to pay higher prices, attend games more frequently and consume more merchandise was targeted (cf. Meng et al. 199). Devotion to a franchise originates from "success, peer group acceptance, vicarious achievement, nostalgia, and star players" (Funk and James 206). Thus, numerous rules and regulations—salary caps, drafts etc.—to warrant a stable, competitive, and fierce league were implemented over time, as competition and its consequential excitement and tension can be considered drivers of elevated revenue (cf. Caudill et al. 246). Disregarding the major draw radiating from franchises, the "NBA is [still] marketed around a limited group of individual stars" (Caudill et al. 246), which is a pivotal reason for this paper's paramount focus on certain players and the underlying narrative strategies they are presented by. Through establishing specific principles, values and ideologies—all of which give room for interpretation regarding historical and cultural roots within larger corporate as well as societal contexts—connected to these *faces of the league,* Stern aimed at fabricating a depiction that was supposed to enhance affirmation of and identification with the league in both sympathizers and sponsors alike (cf. Gwinner). These connoted principles and ideologies—the crucial constituents of corporate narratology –persist almost unchanged for Stern's entire tenure as commissioner.

Intending to simultaneously offer dichotomous narrative paragons, Stern frequently applied a dual strategy. By running a dual strategy, the league can approach various target groups more profitably than with a singular scheme. A supreme specimen for the 1970s way of dealing with the Black/White-binary is the Magic Johnson/Larry Bird rivalry. At the same time Stern was nurturing Michael Jordan's statuette which was about to flourish in the 1990s. Beneficial for and shared by all three athletes was their clean record regarding public transgressions, making them ideal candidates for Stern's commercialization and the idea of marketability. They all "contributed to the (racial) re-assemblage of the NBA […]" (Andrews 505) and played a pivotal role in establishing new genres and ideological constructs exceeding the Black/White contrariety. Despite magnificent athletic production throughout their careers, some might argue that large parts of these athletes' aura and legendary status result from well-planned exploits by a profit-driven marketing machine.

[27] The dichotomy of Blackophilia and Blackophobia describes the fact that certain actors selectively embrace and/or identify with traits, actions, and/or products of the Black community while actively discriminating against others (cf. Yousman). The NBA as well as its associates have been pending between these two extremes, depending on the temporal as well as cultural context. Or, in short: the NBA and its associates used Blackness and the related items/products depending on their marketability which, in turn, depended on the cultural and historical climate at the time.

Magic and Bird

The rivalry between Larry Bird and Erving *Magic* Johnson cannot be fully grasped if one does not account for the saga surrounding their corresponding teams, the Boston Celtics and Los Angeles Lakers. With both franchises having won multiple NBA championships, these are the two most traditionally rich organizations in the league. Surprisingly, the overwhelmingly White Boston Celtics were underachieving in the late 1970s until Larry Bird led them back to their winning ways. However, the predominantly Black Los Angeles Lakers had just been to the semifinals one year prior to Johnson's arrival, were powered by Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, and thought of as one of the most exhilarating and electrifying attractions the league had to offer (cf. Smith 3). With the addition of Johnson, the Lakers completed their historically great team, which went on to be known as the *Showtime Lakers*. The recurring theme of entertainment and witchcraft within the Lakers' and Johnson's nicknames, *Showtime* and *Magic*, indicates the prevailing image of Black players at the time. During the 1980s, Black achievements were frequently ascribed to genetic advantages rather than acknowledging the countless hours of work and commitment (cf. Carrington 4689). Arguing in the same line of thought, labeling something as *Showtime* can be considered an act of devaluation, as "Black athletic success was not ascribed to strategy but to attributes like height and strength" (Williams 62). With Magic Johnson, a 6-foot-9-inch point guard, and a high-pace as well as highlights generating playing style that does not rely on a legion of rehearsed sets, systems and half-court offense, the Showtime Lakers can be read as the epitome of the mentioned stereotype. Therefore, inspired by Johnson's and the Lakers' preconditions such as size, vertical leap, and playing style, their illustration was notably influenced by already existing convictions stemming from the 1970s. With all these factors playing in concert, the fable of an athletically elite Black athlete winning with ease, while effortlessly entertaining the public, was fortified. Thus, the race-based associations Erving Johnson and Larry Bird had to endure are largely coherent with the contrariety between the (White) NBA and (Black) ABA. In these cases, Black players and teams were presented as physically superior yet solitary acting athletes (cf. Criblez 374) rather than their White counterparts, who captivated audiences with toughness, teamwork, on-court intelligence, and bravery (cf. Criblez 374). A dynamic that can be observed within the Johnson versus Bird or, on a larger scale, the Lakers versus Celtics rivalry. It becomes obvious that Johnson symbolizes the athletically supreme Black magician (cf. Kränzle and Brinke 96) contrasted by Larry Bird, who despite his physical disadvantages, dominated his predominantly Black adversaries with discipline, team play, toughness, high basketball IQ, and hard work (cf. Smith 3). These antagonisms in presentation were not chosen or strategized by those players themselves or derived from their performance-based statistics—Erving Johnson was known for his magnificent basketball IQ and high assist numbers, which are generally considered to be team-player features—but superficially placed upon them by both media and advertisement; both being linked to and/or co-dependent on the NBA. Moreover, previous Celtics greats like John Havlicek or Dave Cowens—both driving forces in the Celtics' championship runs in the early 1970s—were decorated with similar characteristics such as solidarity, intellect, sharpness, and toughness (cf. Smith 5) which is a further indicator for the *characterization by association* scheme proposed in this section. Even though both teams celebrated stupendous success in the 1980s, their leading characters' depictions follow trends of the previous decade. With Michael Jordan entering the stage in 1984, these dynamics were about to change.

The Rise of *His Airness*

With Michael Jordan starring on their team, the Chicago Bulls managed to win all their six NBA championships in the 1990s. As his nickname *Air Jordan* reveals, Jordan was blessed with nonpareil physical gifts. Displaying his mastery at the Olympic Games in 1992, which the NBA used to embark on a massive globalization strategy, he became "perhaps the best and most well-known athlete in the world"

(Dyson 64). These factors made Jordan ascend to an unquestionably iconic cultural status. His following reached religious-like inclinations, as he was called "basketball's high priest" (Bradley 60) and "more popular than Jesus," but pocketing "better endorsement deals" (Vancil, "Playboy" 51). So how did Jordan captivate audiences, supporters, and sponsors uniformly?

It started with David Stern's first significant act as commissioner, the renegotiation of TV rights. Due to TV and media exposure rapidly gaining relevance, professional sports became commercialized, and economic logics have gradually dominated sports matters (cf. Dauncey and Hare 11). This resulted in the massive influence of television, sports and sponsors[28] on the portrayal of sports biggest stars (cf. Steen 2234). Before playing a single NBA game, Jordan was approached by an assurgent shoe brand, which designed a custom sneaker solely for him. With Jordan ascending to global fame, Nike arose to be the most prominent and prestigious sports supplies manufacturer in the world. Throughout his career, Jordan starred in manifold advertisements but was separated from stereotypical portrayal of urban Black Americans (cf. Andrews and Silk 1629). In an attempt to sell Black culture to a White audience, the NBA championed hip hop culture in the early 1990s (cf. Lorenz and Murray 28), yet they kept Jordan away from the hip hop imagery, probably to disconnect him from the conceptions connected to urban Blackness like hyper-masculinity, misogyny, violence, and the overemphasis on material wealth (cf. Rose 1, 2). Therefore, Jordan was introduced as the "embodiment of American virtue" (Naughton 154). *His Airness* getting cut from his high school team and having to struggle his way to a college scholarship at North Carolina before entering the NBA was a gateway to hail his superior ambition and unprecedented work-ethic. These references towards attributes that were previously reserved for White players made him surpass the racial tensions and fit him in with the Reaganite doctrine (cf. Andrews and Silk 1627). In many ways, Jordan can be considered a counterexample to the stereotypical Black player. Furthermore, his tremendous work-ethic was coupled with an obsession to compete and actually used to disassociate him from an overemphasis on materialism and wealth: "I love to compete and it isn't for the money. I like the challenge. I could play you for a dollar. But… if I'm going to play then I'm going to play to win. That's enjoyable to me. That's fun… We can play for pride. That's enough. But I am going to try to beat you" (Michael Jordan qtd. in Vancil, *More Rare Air* 76).

A prime example of these attributes being placed on Jordan is a 1993 Super Bowl commercial by McDonald's called *The Showdown* starring him and the aforementioned Larry Bird (cf. Norris). In the spot, Bird is working on his shot in an empty gym as Jordan enters with a McDonald's bag containing his lunch. Bird then challenges Jordan to "play [him] for it" (Briggs 00:06-00:07). Jordan looks intrigued, answers with "you and me for my Big Mac?" (Briggs 00:09-00:10) and the two end up having an epic shootout with "the first one to miss watch[ing] the winner eat" (Briggs 00:10-00:12). Three major points of interest immediately arise here. Firstly, his opponent Larry Bird. Bird's role in the characteristics attached to Black and White players respectively has been discussed in detail in the previous section. While he used to serve as a counterpart to *Magic* Johnson in the 1980s, here he is not only Michael Jordan's level peer, but his affiliate, as they privately work out together (even though Bird had retired from professional basketball the previous year). Secondly, the whole spectacle takes place in an empty gym with blacked out stands. So obviously there is no one watching. With not a soul to impress and nobody knowing about their encounter, Jordan could simply have enjoyed his lunch and gone back to work on his craft afterwards. However, his

[28] Here it becomes particularly obvious that images of athletes are not solely created or shaped by the league but also by sponsors, advertisers, and the wider cultural environment (i.e. the music or film industry), as Michael Jordan—among a plethora of cultural productions—also starred in the movie *Space Jam* (1996). However, they all are economically driven and adhere to an economic logic. This also explains why these efforts, even though they are perpetuated by different actors, all direct into the same (or at least a highly similar) direction, as these economic ideals have permeated these actors, institutions, and organizations through corporate colonization.

love to compete and hunger for a challenge are so insatiable that he ignores his most pivotal needs (nutrition, rest) and puts his precious Big Mac on the line. Which brings up the third point of interest: the prize. For context, Bird's Celtics badly beat Jordan's Bulls every year and ended their season in the playoffs since Jordan came into the league in 1984 until around 1990, when Bird's body started to break down due to age and injuries. Then the Bulls significantly bolstered their roster, and Jordan's athletic ascension took place. Now with all of their history, Bird and Jordan find themselves in an empty gym having a shootout—for a Big Mac and some French fries, a consolation price at best. With the winner's reward being utterly neglectable, the image that stays with the spectator (in front of the TV screen) is Bird and Jordan having a legendary shootout neither for money, nor fame, nor even a semi-nutritious meal, but for the pure sake of competition and athletic fulfillment. On another note, the commercial does not give a winner, highlighting the advertisement's aim to put Larry Bird and Michael Jordan on the same level and merge the one's attributes with the other's personality.

Unfittingly, Jordan bargained his already agreed upon indenture in 1996 to have him earn 30 million dollars for a single season (cf. Denzin 324).[29] It becomes obvious that the presented depiction of Blackness is highly spurious and pursues the construction of an (American) hero; an athlete, who desires to demonstrate his dominance for competition purposes only. Although this combination of attributes does not seem groundbreaking in today's world of sports, merging the elements of the heavenly gifted physical specimen with a tremendous intrinsic motivation to outwork one's opponents shatters boundaries that would have never been touched in previous periods. Therefore, Michael Jordan's representation was revolutionary under the circumstances of the time. By unifying the aforementioned qualities, Jordan embodied the idea of an economically productive and patriarchal member of White corporate life (cf. Maharaj 230). Altogether, Commissioner David Stern and his corporate allies merged the most profitable particulars of Black and White clichés in Jordan. These developments do not come across as majorly inventive in retrospect, but they fit the Reaganite climate, which prided itself on free and individual choice (cf. May 444) fused with meritocracy. Still, Jordan's illustration highlights the epitome of the common stereotypical Black basketball player prior to him by amalgamating Calvinistic ideas with "the attitude of hope and faith that looks forward to the fulfillment of human wishes and desires" (Ping 11)—pivotal features of the *American Dream* and the quintessential hero mythos (cf. Campbell; Neuhaus and Vogt). The immortalized saga of an individual who seizes "virtually all values of corporate America" (Neuhaus and Thomas 185) and by doing so, encounters a spiritual, social, and economic rebirth, has regularly been employed as a satisfying tale for essentially White audiences (cf. Sailes 137), who seek confirmation for their faith in an equitable and impartial world; a world in which people, who keep fighting and never quit, are honored. This thesis is reinforced by looking at Jordan's chief sponsor Nike's mantra declaring all goals to be achievable if you *Just Do It*.

Conclusions and Implications for the Present

Michael Jordan's public person was, partly consciously, partly unconsciously, constructed around a set of values, allusions, and associations, all of which were chosen because they were suspected to resonate well with the targeted audiences and translate into higher acceptance of the product and ultimately into higher revenue. The tremendous economic success during David Stern's term as commissioner and

[29] Adjusted for inflation, this would be the equivalent of roughly $51,000,000 in today's money. This salary matches the salaries of today's top stars; however, it should be considered that the overall revenue of the league as well as the individual teams was lower in 1996 compared to 2022.

beyond[30] has proven that this has been the case. This success can be, among other factors, ascribed to the faces of the league. This paper investigated the construction of Michael Jordan's persona and compared it to superstars of an earlier era. Even though Michael Jordan's career has long been over, Jordan—as well as his image—serve as a comparative framework as well as a blueprint for generations of basketball superstars. A narratological analysis of more recent superstars—Kobe Bryant, Lebron James, or Giannis Antetokounmpo—would lead, with some temporal specific additions, to similar results, as all of them are designed referencing the corporate benign values which were employed to craft the persona of Michael Jordan. Therefore, the analysis of Michael Jordan's publicly presented persona tackles the issue of consumed bodies, created images, and players being designed with economic interests—a phenomenon we addressed with reference to corporate colonization of the athlete's bodies—at the deepest possible level. A deeper look at Jordan unveils the references and motifs which have first been used to promote Jordan and which have been employed as marketing tools but also as devices of corporate discourse until this very day, yet with diverging actors. As such, Jordan was the first player to be solely designed in such fashion, making Jordan the blueprint and/or the first basketball-related manifestation of the archetype outlined above. Thus, Jordan unites the values corporate America appoints to sell sports, athletes, and bodies to their target audiences. These values can be subsumed as the archetypical hero myth (cf. Campbell) of which the American Dream can be read as one manifestation thereof. The constructed American superhero is characterized by his Calvinistic work ethic, his productivity, his meritocratic desire to prove himself, and the myth of having created himself. It is no coincidence that Jordan has often been associated with Christian symbolism, i.e. "basketball's high priest" (Bradley 60), as the core of his persona is rooted in religious belief and thought.[31] Oftentimes, this non-political manifestation of religious values has been associated with White populations of the United States, which could explain the tremendous resonance with Jordan among that viewership. The problem with archetypical representations as core references is that no real person can fully manifest the archetype, as it is an unattainable goal. Michael Jordan has had his flaws (i.e. gambling) just as any other athlete. However, from a marketing perspective the archetype must remain intact as it can be considered—due to its high degree of compatibility with viewership—the most economically fruitful representation. As a result, all things violating that unattainable standard must be neglected, overshadowed, or covered up—a phenomenon we described with reference to corporate colonization of the athlete's image, body, and persona.

Colonized Body, Colonized Speech? (Outlook)

This paper investigated the illustration of Michael Jordan. As argued, the (hi)story of *His Airness* has primarily been narrated by the corporate decision-makers in the NBA, as well as the associated brands manifested in a plethora of—partly implicit, partly explicit—decisions, allusions, and connotations. However, this kind of corporate-polished narratology is only one way to look at and make sense of the world and, especially within the last 15 years, subaltern voices have gradually gained ground in new arenas of public discourse. Social media can be considered one such arena. While the emergence of mass media first helped to commodify sports (cf. Jackson 494) and enabled the—arguably global (cf. Rowe 4)—corporate narratological primacy in professional sports and elsewhere, new forms of person-to-person communication (cf. Santomier and Shuart 87) and unfiltered, online expression may add an alternative facet to the (for the longest time) unchallenged corporate narratology. Social media accounts open up

[30] Stern was succeeded by Adam Silver who was an affiliate of Stern and primarily follows a similar approach as Stern. As such, even the time after Stern's term can be read with the perspective cultivated in this paper.

[31] This strengthens the suspected connection between Christendom, capitalism, and the national state (cf. Weber) or at least highlights their high degree of compatibility.

windows for athletes[32] to express and position themselves with regard to a wide range of topics and thereby challenge dominant interpretative structures. Even though the NBA actively attempts to inhibit player's expression and criticism through punitive measures, it was shown that especially basketball players are active Twitter users and express thoughts which deviate from the polished image the NBA tries to attach to them (cf. Xu/Yu/Hoi). The analysis of online discourse promises to be a fruitful field of future research, as it will be negotiated how real-life power structures—and with them the dominant narratives—transfer into a world in which subaltern voices are more accessible.[33] Future research will show how the different actors in this field reacted to this change of setting, what kind of alliances were made and where tensions arose. Also, the internet introduces a new kind of transparency to corporate narratology, which has the potential to highlight internal incoherencies. As the case of Donald Sterling has shown—recordings of him making racist remarks about players were spread on the internet (cf. Lavelle "No room")—, the world of professional basketball is not "a world free of racism" (B'beri and Hogarth 90). While such instances used to be limited to the testimony of witnesses and could easily be overshadowed and/or be made invisible by powerful media outlets and/or corporate structures, the internet has partly evened out the playing field. Future research will show how the historically grown power structures will react to these changes in environment and how a diverging set of actors may try to employ these measures to pursue their purposes. All of these developments will shape the image of how players, franchises, and the league will be perceived by fans, observers, and scholars.

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[32] While this section primarily looks at forms of expressions and subaltern/alternative voices in the discourse, social media accounts also open up new possibilities with regard to (self-)marketing, sales, and the like. Especially for college athletes, who were hindered to benefit financially from their names until 2021, this opens up windows of opportunities.

[33] Also, diverging corporate logics collide in this sphere as the internet primarily sees attention—in the form of views, shares, and likes—as its currency. This is made possible as time spent on these platforms increases the social media platform's revenue generated from advertisements. While this opens the possibility of corporate competition with regard to information and narratives, also a new form of commercialization and consumption of people, images, and bodies emerges.

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Spiral Coercion: Nazi Power and Family Authority in Charlotte Salomon's Autobiographical Work *Life? Or Theatre?*

Abstract: *Life? or Theatre?* is a visual-theatrical, textual, and auto-biographical play of Charlotte Salomon, a Jewish talented artist, executed at a very young age in the Auschwitz concentration camp. In this paper, I consider Salomon's work a document of life, and a testimony of her personal intra-familial, and personal experience of "the before—Auschwitz" (Jenn-Gastal 228) depicting, among others, historical and socio-political facts articulated and expressed through narrative and painting. Since in Sociology life stories or autobiographical narratives constitute a valuable tool, I will employ Salomon's drawings, captions and texts as a "synergetic fusing of social sciences and the arts" (Bagley 34), in order to shed ample light on her reconstructed lived experience. This research aims at examining Salomon's autobiographical work from a sociological and philosophical perspective, referring to the views of great theorists, such as Hannah Arendt, Zygmunt Bauman, and the founders of the Frankfurt School, who tried to explain the origins of totalitarianism, power relations and the causes of the Holocaust.

Keywords: Charlotte Salomon, Life or Theatre, autobiography, Nazism, power, authority

> "*I have enough of this life*. *I have enough of this time*." (Charlotte Salomon: *Leben? Oder Theater?*

Introduction

Charlotte Salomon was a German-Jewish artist, born in 1917 and raised in Berlin by an upper middle-class family during the Weimar period. She was arrested and executed in 1943 at the age of 26, pregnant, at the concentration camp of Auschwitz. Her happy and carefree childhood was abruptly unsettled by the loss of her mother and the rise of Nazism. In 1933, one year before her graduation, she dropped out of school due to the increasing propagandistic anti-Semitism and violence towards Jewish students. Two years later, Salomon was admitted to the State Art Academy in Berlin where only 1.5 percent of Jewish candidates were being accepted. In 1937, although she won an art contest at the same school, her Jewish identity made the committee discern the award to an "Aryan" girl. After that incident, Salomon decided to stop attending courses. In the meantime, she became infatuated with Alfred Wolfsohn, her stepmother's voice coach. The main section of her opus *Life? Or Theatre?* is mostly focused on the different phases of her semi-platonic, spiritual, and philosophical connection to Wolfsohn, and the competitive relationship with her stepmother, Paula. The testimony of surviving Alfred and Paula, many years after their daughter's death, that Charlotte and Alfred had actually never had a love affair, is an important information that raises the question of whether *Life? Or Theatre?* is an authentic autobiography.

Shortly after the November 9, 1938, organized pogroms against the Jews, her father was arrested and kept at the labor camp of Sachsenhausen, from which he was released sick and weakened. In order to keep Charlotte safe, the Salomons sent their daughter to her maternal grandparents in Cote d'Azur,

France, where they lived in Ottilie Moore's, a wealthy German widow's, villa in Villefranche. Charlotte Salomon's stay in France was marked by anxiety and frustration caused by the uprooting, the constraint, the authoritative personality of her grandfather, and the dramatic revelations related to a series of suicides in the Salomon family, including that of her mother's. She also experienced, along with her grandfather—her grandmother had committed suicide—the enclosure at the concentration camp of Gurs in France, during May-June 1940, in which Hannah Arendt was also incarcerated, one month later. After being released, and during a period of self-isolation from 1940 to 1943 in Ottilie Moore's villa and in different small towns near Nice, Charlotte Salomon painted over a thousand gouaches characterized by a particular technique, influenced not only by painters such as Chagall, Munch, and Modigliani, but also by German expressionism. Her drawings integrate musical accompaniments (suggested vocal melodies and instrumental pieces) and shorter or longer texts, always in "formal language" (Benesch 62), producing a multi-layered and a "multi-genre visual narrative" (Bagley 33). Salomon's art quite often follows the storyboard structure pre-announcing the modern graphic novels' genre (Freedman 4). While living in Villefranche, she married Alexander Nagler, an Austrian Jew refugee, with whom she got pregnant. A few months later they were arrested and deported to Auschwitz, where they both died. Before being captured, Charlotte had entrusted her autobiographical, voluminous work with the title *Life? or Theater?* (*Leben? Oder Theater?*) to a close friend, Doctor Morides, who kept and preserved it, until it was finally handed over to her surviving parents.

Life? Or Theatre? is a "dramatized autobiography," (Buerkle, *Nothing Happened* 1) an "artistic diary," often compared to that of Anna Frank's. The complete title in German is *Leben? Oder Theater? Ein Singespiel* with the letter "e" in the word *singespiel* to be redundant as the correct orthography is "singspiel." Singspiel refers to a light opera, a spoken drama joined with music that flourished in Germany during the eighteenth century (Timpe 53), "engendered through the various performances and versions emerged as a national symbol, as well as an accessible entertainment, for a divided people" (van Boer 132). This "singespiel," as Salomon named it, is divided into three sections: The Prelude, the Main Section, and the Epilogue. Although the historic events are based on reality and the characters were members of either her family or of their social circle, she chose to change the names, mixing reality and fiction, truth and likeness to the truth. "By choosing names close to yet different from the originals and structuring the series according to the history, she simultaneously insists upon and denies her story's truth" (Barnett 99). In her "singespiel," Salomon mostly reveals or rather confesses, family secrets, her feelings about her mother's suicide and her father's second wife, her unrequited passion for her stepmother's voice coach, her exile in France, her problematic relationship with her grandfather, the brutality of the Nazis, and the Jews' persecution. The Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam, where the Salomons donated their daughter's paintings, brought out into the light her rich and original artistic production, on which numerous research and academic studies have been carried out. The interest in this young artist has further increased after the publication of David Foenkinos' biographic novel *Charlotte* in 2014. Undoubtedly, Salomon's legacy is priceless, not only for scholars of art history, but also for the social scientists, and more especially for those investigating the field of autobiography and the Nazi rule: "Her work stands as a temporal, visually aesthetic testimony for a short life, lived both within and against the ideology and actions of the Nazi regime by which she was to be murdered" (Bagley 44).

Self-narration and the Holocaust Theories as Methodological Tools

Autobiography in its origins constituted the storytelling and the memoirs of important men, based on real events and lived experiences, in a certain historic and social context (Gasparini). Those memoirs of notable people coming from the clergy, the aristocracy, or the high bourgeois class, were structured in the form of intimate journals, reports of journeys, or military, political, and diplomatic assignments,

aiming at transferring personal perspectives and impressions of significant historical, social, and political events. In this sense, life narration of that time may be considered as an indirect or secondary historical source, and as a genealogical record of distinguished families and houses. Nonetheless, under the influence of the romantic movement in the second half of the eighteenth century, and after the publication of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *Confessions* in 1768, the autobiography took a more introspective, existential and revealing turn. It gradually lost its historic and political direction, while the attention was drawn to the suffering, and "dystopic," self-referential subject, who affirmed his discontent and his detachment from the society by being at the same time a part of it (Lovejoy, Wellek, Furst, Berlin). Since then, autobiography has become a valuable field of research, mainly for literary, psychological, and social studies. Doubrovsky (*Fils* and *La Vie l'Instant*) introduced the neologism "autofiction" describing the fictionalized autobiography. This alternative view promoted an equivocal relationship with reality, claiming greater freedom as far as the enunciation and the form of the writing are concerned (Gasparini 15). In "autofiction," all the conventional characteristics of the autobiography are rejected, as for example a reliable, consistent reminiscence, and the description of real facts, prioritizing instead the plunge into the unconscious of an "imagined existence" (Doubrovsky, *La Vie l'Instant*).

Young Salomon tracks twenty-seven years of her own and her family's life, from 1913 to 1940 in Germany, and in France. Her play starts with Charlotte Grunwald's, her mother's sister's suicide, which took place four years before Charlotte Salomon was born. *Life? or Theatre?* is at the same time a topic and a resource (Plummer), a performing biography of Salomon's own autobiography. A performing self, however, according to Erving Goffman's (1956) dramaturgical approach, is not necessarily a theatrical or a fictional self, but any interacting actor of a social life. In social sciences self-narrations pave the path for a creative (re)form and (re)interpretation of self and reality, within a framework of a beneficial coherence and cohesiveness linking dynamically the individual to the social (Tsiolis). Disruptions, dislocations, traumas, and ruptures may be eased, settled, thus offering the individual the possibility to undertake meaningful action, explore new perspectives and alternatives, restore order, and confront transitions and new challenges (Tsiolis, Tsiolis & Christodoulou). Salomon's autobiographical truth is conveyed through the device of the *mise-en-abyme*, a story within a story, a real one within a semi-fictional one in Salomon's case, with embedded characters, images and ideas. Her art-based narration is assisted by Foenkinos' biography *Charlotte* (2014), in which Salomon's life, self, and reality, are (re)constructed anew along with Germany's dictatorial rule of National Socialism. More precisely, Salomon's personal testimony has been bequeathed to public exposure not only as an original artistic production, but also as a valuable source representing the history of the Holocaust.

To date, academic production around Salomon has focused primarily on the importance of her artistic nature and the originality of her work, but also on recurrent themes of her work, such as trauma, memory, suicide, and the identity of the Jewish woman during the Weimar period and Hitler's Germany. The present article intends to provide new insights and to contribute to the academic research by exploring a subject that has not been up to now studied in Salomon's work, that is, the representations of totalitarianism, coercion, and power in the public and private spheres. The content of Charlotte Salomon's artistic autobiographical production proves and corroborates to a large extent the theoretical concepts and interpretations of the Nazi totalitarianism and family authority formulated by renowned German-Jewish political sociologists and philosophers, such as Hannah Arendt, Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, Erich Fromm, and Herbert Marcuse. Salomon's illustrations and texts will be approached and analyzed as evidence of spiral coercion extended to all levels of her life, from public to private. Furthermore, it will be investigated how the political and social thoughts and ideas of the above-mentioned intellectuals correlate with the way young Salomon depicts through her images and texts, the different aspects of a ubiquitous and omnipotent domination. The emphasis will be put on the evaluation of first-hand

information related to the way she as a Jew was experiencing the consequences of the prohibitions, aggressions, and interventions in her private, professional, and social life, but also the experience of living in a conservative, middle-class, assimilated Jewish family. Salomon's artistic memoirs (re)present on the one hand variants of power, control, and authority exercised in public and in private, and on the other, the degree to which these phenomena were affecting the (re)construction of her own personal identity (Pollock), of a social and civil self, and of socio-political reality. Under the prism of Arendt's, Adorno's, Horkheimer's, Fromm's, and Marcuse's theories on the Nazi sovereignty, the antisemitic politics, and the family structures, I will shape and follow throughout Salomon's autobiographic illustrations, a "spiral" schematic approach, beginning from the outer shell, the macro-environment, and finally arrive at the micro-relations and interpersonal family interactions.

Power and Public Sphere

A. Drawing the Power of the Mass

While Salomon's pictorial narrative of the Prelude's first part is focused on her family's lifetime and history of suicide, the second act is mostly concerned with sovereign power expressed by the Nazi absolutism. The reader/spectator is abruptly transferred from the life-scenes of a wealthy, middle-class, educated, and cultured group of assimilated Jews, to an unruly and savage mass of Nazis. The Prelude's second act begins with an illustration showing an immense parade of the National Socialist corps on January 30, 1933, and the appropriation of the public space and public life by an impersonal, homogenous, faceless, and fluid mass. The image of a flag with an inverted swastika constitutes an ironic commentary, a negation and a contestation of the Nazi symbols, which complements and intensifies her incorporated text:

> People look at the swastika—full of hope—The day of freedom and of bread dawns. Just at this time, many Jews—who, with all their often undesirable efficiency, are perhaps a pushy and insistent race, happened to be occupying government and other senior positions—and after the Nazi seizure of power they were all dismissed without notice. You know how this affects the different human-Jewish souls! (Salomon 234)

The antisemitic "April laws of 1933" climaxed the Jews' expulsion from the civil service, the legal and medical professions, schools and universities, even from the public spaces (Kaplan 583-584). A complementary sheet depicts a pogrom against the Jewish shops, and Nazi soldiers participating in a small-scale parade. A minor group of people, in total apathy towards the aggression and the mob taking place right behind them, form a circle around a high billboard, on which the German newspaper *Der Strümer* gives specific antisemitic instructions:

> *Der Strümer*
> Newspaper of Popular Enlightenment
> The Jew has only made money from your blood. The Jewish big shots paid for the world war. The Jew has deceived and betrayed you, so German men and women!
> Take your revenge!!!
> 1 April 1933
> Boycott the Jews! Whoever buys from a Jew is also a swine. (Salomon 237)

At the Main Section of her play, we can find a similar image of a mob imposing its power by spreading terror in front of successive, high buildings, with red swastika flags hanging from numerous windows. Salomon represents the savageness and the fury of a violent crowd causing death, injuries and extensive

damage during the "Crystal Night" on November 9, 1938. The caption put on the top left side of the sheet makes the scene even more intense, and dramatic: "Croak Judea! Grab what you can!" (469). Before that, Salomon refers, through another sketch-text, to the assassination of the German diplomat Ernst von Rath in Paris by the Polish Jewish student Herschel Grynszpan, an act that had been used by the National Socialist Party as an excuse for an open call for the Jews' extermination:

> 9 November 1938
> The Attack
>
> Cowardly Jewish Murder from an ambush—abroad. Jew Grünspan sneaks into the German Consulate and shoots a German diplomat. The entire German nation stands shocked at the bier of its son. This is the last disgraceful act of Judea's power. The German people will take their revenge. German men and women: Our forbearance against the criminal Jewish world-power has come to an end. (469)

According to Hannah Arendt, masses and totalitarianism are interconnected due to the fact that "the totalitarian movements aim at and succeed in organizing masses" ("Part One" 308). And:

> Totalitarian movements are possible wherever there are masses who for one reason or another have acquired the appetite for political organization. Masses are not held together by a consciousness of common interest and they lack that specific class articulateness which is expressed in determined, limited, and attainable goals. The term 'masses' applies only where we deal with people who either because of sheer numbers, or indifference, or a combination of both, cannot be integrated into any organization based on common interest, into political parties or municipal governments or professional organizations or trade unions. ("Part One" 311-312)

Mass movements and the will to impose power derive not only from conjectural conditions and socio-political marginality (Baehr), but also from extreme atomization of people with no social relations, or any other attachments, being guided by their fantasies and imagination (Arendt, "Part One"). Totalitarianism and masses in Salomon's images work as two communicating vessels. The fact that the figures have no distinct features intensifies the disappearance of a conscious personality and a unique identity (Le Bon). That immense totality of individualities disposes of an immense power inspired and sometimes directed by an elite or a leader aiming at gaining control. As a result, reason recedes in front of conformity and standardized ideas (Horkheimer). National Socialism in Germany proved to be extremely successful in manipulating the masses by unleashing the most brutal and selfish instincts of the individual (Marcuse, *Technology* 9). It had the magic power to make the distinct individualities perceive themselves at the same time as a mass and a distinct elite (Adorno).

Masses are considered to offer two important things to a total leader: legitimization and cohesiveness. Arendt stresses that a totalitarian leader, such as Hitler, is "functionary of the masses he leads," and at the same time a "nonentity" without them ("Part One" 325). Freud (1947) for his part insists more on the natural drive of individuals to obey and to be ruled. For Freud, a sum of hypnotized persons willing to submit themselves to a total ruler is an expression and an act of love. Through this "erotic manipulation of the masses," the totalitarian state applies, without any restrictions or resistance, its fundamental principles of power (Rieff 249). Le Bon (2013) also recognizes the instinctive need of the herd-behaved mass not for freedom, but for submission to a despotic and heroic Caesar-like leadership, which exercises power over it. What makes mass powerful despite its servility to a total authority is on the one hand the absence of responsibility and accountability, and on the other, its sense of mastering the weaker (Le Bon). That is exactly what Salomon denounced on a gouache depicting Paula Lindberg

being bullied and asked by a group of Nazis to step out while performing on a theatre stage (241). In Salomon's works the masses, as non-institutionalized forms of domination, are driven by a quasi-primary desire to initiate the process for the Jews' downfall, and precipitate their financial misery and social disgrace.

B. Drawing the Power of the State and Its Impact on Jewish German Citizens

In Salomon's pictorial play, the authoritarian drift of Hitler's system of power is not only expressed through the representations of spontaneous or more organized mobs, but also by the new ideology and the new forms of the State's structure and organization. The National Socialist Party's oppressive domination was to a large degree inspired by Nietzsche's moral and political philosophy, and mainly by his ideas expressed in his collected notes *The Will to Power* (1st edition—1901). For Nietzsche, society is not at all altruistic, much less valuable than the unit, while virtue is a mere "means to strength, power, and order" (382). The generative force and fundamental innate drive of power is the will to impose power on another will, the desire for domination. The will to power is a transcendent and sublimated value that justifies and promotes the exercise of control over the other(s), and it is synonymous with the will to remain free. For Max Weber, power (*Macht*) "is the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance, regardless of the basis on which this probability rests" (152). Weber claims that the state, as the supreme power, must operate and function on a rational basis, on the grounds of legal action and applied laws, while being at the same time the only body entitled to exert legitimate and administratively organized violence within a geographically defined territory. After 1933, with the establishment of the Nazi regime, the state gathered in its hands all the legal power and put into effect a great number of decrees and laws, in order to exert a panoptic control over the German citizens, and especially over the Jews. Its "efficiency" was based on the Weberian-like rigid administrative bureaucratic system of strict hierarchical structure, in which discipline, devotion, and obedience, replaced moral virtue (Bauman). For Bauman, the Holocaust was possible because of the instrumental rationality and bureaucratic procedures managed by a legitimate authority on the grounds of predetermined rules, oriented towards the achievement of concrete goals, as described in Weber's (1947) model of bureaucracy. That was exactly the principal argument of Hannah Arendt's (1964) concept of the "banality of evil" while reporting Eichmann's trial in Jerusalem.

The second act of the Prelude in *Life? Or Theatre?* provides us with sketches narrating the oppressive power of the Nazi regime manifested not only through violent pogroms against Jew-owned stores, but also through the implementation of discriminatory policies and laws aiming at isolating, and excluding the Jews from civil service and cultural life. In April 1933 the "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service" went into effect, and under the pretext of a general reformation, all non-"Aryan" employees were suspended from the state services and art professions. Salomon describes how her father lost his academic status as Professor at the Medicine School, while her stepmother was banned from all opera performances and artistic public activities. She also depicts the oscillation of the Jewish community between "normality and terror," "anxiety and hope," the movement "from a relatively porous relationship with the surrounding society to a severely encapsulated one" (Kaplan 584). Hannah Arendt in the *Jewish Writings* (2007) speaks about a withdrawal of the Jews after 1933 from the social and cultural life, the "*teshuva,*" which means "repentance," return to Judaism. This attitude proved to be a fatality that led to the Holocaust:

> The refusal to analyze or deal with or indeed to confront antisemitism was tantamount to a political refusal to offer any defense whatever. For it said that one was not even interested in one's enemy, but merely submitted to his obviously overwhelming power. But there is no question that in politics knowing your enemy is at least as important as knowing yourself. (42-43)

The accomplished fact of being culturally deprived led prominent Jews to take action and organize associations addressed to "racially defined" audiences, according to Nazi laws. The Jewish communities and organizations seemed to be at that time the last resort and the only lifeline for persecuted Judaism. Dr. Singsang—who in reality was Kurt Singer, a Jewish renowned composer dismissed from the City Opera House, and personal friend of Charlotte Salomon's stepmother, Paula Lindberg—is represented at the very moment where he captures the idea for the creation of the Cultural Union of German Jews (*Kulturbund Deutscher Juden*), as an alternative and response to Jews' exclusion from Germany's cultural life in 1933. The *Kulturbund* operated unhindered all over Germany until 1941, offering jobs to unemployed Jewish artists, performers, and writers, and giving hope, through artistic performances, to thousands of people living daily with the fear of persecutions, humiliation, and physical violence. In an effort to maintain a good relationship with the National Socialist Party, Kurt Singer alias Dr. Singsang, pursued a meeting with Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda and Head of the Reich Chamber of Culture (*Reichs Kulturkammer*) which controlled arts, literature, music, and theatre. Salomon describes their meeting:

> Minister:
> "I am the Minista for Propaganda! I'm busy night and day, no time for rest or play. Come in, come in!" (to himself) "Yes, this is a good project, probably he would be my man. Just a pity he's a Jew—must see if I cannot make him an honorary Aryan." (241)
>
> ***
>
> Minister:
> "Your request has been approved. Have a cigarette." (244)

The *Kulturbund* was allowed to operate, despite the extensive implementation of laws and regulations prohibiting Jews from constituting part of the state's labor force, business, and artistic production (Freedman). Even though the Nazi conspiracy theory sustained that the politics, trade, commerce, the mass media and the art had been controlled by the Jews, their major plan was to conceal their persecution project from the Jews, to gain their trust and collaborate with them in order to proceed to their extermination with the minimum of resistance (Arendt, Bauman, Kaplan).

Salomon, through her text, presents Goebbels as a comic caricature. The word "minista" instead of "minister" is there on purpose. Her device of inverting the Nazis' symbols (e.g. the swastika), is also employed here anew through the reversed Nazi's argumentation and means of propaganda, in order to fight them back with their own arms. Horkheimer in his essay "The Revolt of Nature" (1947) argues that at the beginning of our life we become and we enter civilization through mimetic gestures. We continue learning by imitating characters, reactions, and other patterns of behavior until we form a conscious self and this is the stage where mimetic impulses, either conscious or unconscious, are transcended as a precondition for the civilization process. Horkheimer considers that malicious imitation of another person was a characteristic of the demagogues, who behaved like comedy actors. Imitating Jews, Roma, or other discriminated races was a common practice at the National Socialist Party rallies.

> Anyone who ever attended a National Socialist meeting in Germany knows that speakers and audience got their chief thrill in acting out socially repressed mimetic drives, even if only in ridiculing and attacking racial enemies accused of impudently flaunting their own mimetic habits […]. One might think of Goebbels. In appearance, he was a caricature of the Jewish salesman whose liquidation he advocated. (Horkheimer 79-80).

Despite her youth and her ignorance of politics, Charlotte Salomon displayed the instinct and the talent of a political analyst. She perceived and exposed the Hitler State strategy, explained later by Zygmunt Bauman, who stresses that the Nazis' initial objective was to apply a total racial *Entfernung*, "an effective removal of the Jews from the life-world of the German race" (120). The Jews, ignoring and underestimating the danger, or probably putting it in the "usual" context of reviving stereotypes of prejudice against their "evil" race permanently charged with crimes, excesses, and vices, had proceeded to rational arrangements and settlements with National Socialists, which at first level seemed not only beneficial, but also safe. Nonetheless, the only outcome of these arrangements was for the Jews to be "earmarked" (Bauman 125) for their social and professional isolation before their physical annihilation. As "Jewish world contained the Nazi power" (Bauman 128), Jews had to adjust and respond adequately to the National Socialist expectations. Kaplan underlines the "speed and ambiguity" of the Nazi attacks and the "ambivalence" of the reaction of Jews regarding the measures against them before November 1938 (*Between Dignity* 4). Jews found themselves confused and optimistic at the same time, unable to read or interpret the ominous signs of the Nazi infiltration into their life at all levels.

Hannah Arendt in the *Jewish Writings* repeats one more time that Jews, after the seizure of power by the Nazis in 1933, did not seem interested in confronting anti-Semitism and that instead of actually taking action, they trusted the German governments. Jews had been trying for a long time to assimilate themselves into the German bourgeois society, feeling actually more German than Jewish. This attitude and lifestyle are reflected in all the illustrations of Salomon, which constitute the first act of the Prelude. Jews had fought as German citizens against France during the First World War, had adopted the German social and cultural practices, participated in national festivals and festivities, shared common values and norms with all the other citizens in Germany. Salomon's drawings constitute a testimony of the German pre-Nazi era, where Jews were living peacefully and harmoniously, fully participating in all forms and aspects of social life. At a personal level, those illustrations are full of memories from family trips and holidays, sporting and artistic activities, Christmas celebrations, and dinner parties. On two sketches depicting her childhood before 1933, she writes referring to herself:

> Her birthday was always a big celebration. The whole class was invited for coffee and supper, and Kurt made a great speech in which he invited the guests to toast to the well-being of the birthday girl. (119)
>
> ***
>
> Charlotte is very pleased; she is also making good progress in school. Hilde is her best friend. In the afternoon they go to Aunt Martha's beautiful garden where they are allowed to eat fruit as long as they like and even milk cows.
> Charlotte:
> "Oh my future still lies ahead of me."
> Charlotte likes to play tennis tremendously, sometimes amazingly good for her age. Aunt Martha is grandma's best friend and while the children play together, the adults drink coffee on the terrace. (159)

Jews were rather integrated than assimilated. Assimilation though, according to Arendt, was superficial and based more on economic than political grounds. Put always inside and outside society, Jews had always been "a nation within a nation and a state within a state" (Arendt 66). At the beginning of the twentieth century and before World War II, the nation-state had disintegrated, Europe was in decline and politically unstable, while Jews had maintained their financial prosperity, without exercising, though, any notable influence on state matters.

Jew's financial standing without "visible function" as Arendt says ("Part One" 4) made them intolerable and created the feeling of "resentment" to which Arendt and Bauman refer regularly as one of the reasons that caused the Holocaust. Hannah Arendt considers that after 1914 resentment for Jews had turned into ideology ("Part One" 82), while Bauman classifies resentment as a fundamental principle of racism. In this case, the Other, the stranger, and the one not identical/not the same as the group, is represented as "repelling," "harmful," "threatening," and "evil" (Bauman 62-63). For political sociology, emotions reproduce and ensure political power and domination, while resentment specifically, is a source of resource mobilization, sustains ideological schemes, triggers political action, and may be put at the service and pursuits of populism (Demertzis). Max Scheler (1998) defines resentment, or *ressentiment*, as a "self-poisoning" feeling, a sum of repressed emotions and effects, fallacious and moral judgments that lead to vengeful, malicious, impulsive, and envious behavior. Jews more resented than before, were not any longer useful to the state. They remained nonetheless connected to it, and as a result, they infiltrated other social groups, mainly the bourgeois class. The wealthy Jews educated themselves and made up part of the national elite and "intelligentsia," excelling in sciences, philosophy, arts, and letters. They became "a radiant power of fame" (Stefan Zweig as qtd. in Hannah Arendt, "Part One" 52) internationally recognized and accepted, but nationally still not fully assimilated, despite their attempts and probably their illusions. It is exactly this decline of the intellectual Jews' "radiant power" that is reflected in Salomon's sketches, a power that was overshadowed by the National Socialist State's dark oppression.

Power and Private Sphere: Drawing the Family Authority

The founding fathers of the Frankfurt School, Adorno, Horkheimer, Fromm, and Marcuse, conducted long scientific research leading to the conclusion that the authoritarian, patriarchal, traditional structure of the families in Germany during the 1930s, contributed to the rise and solidification of the National Socialist Party and Nazism. Herbert Marcuse claims that research on National Socialism explores two aspects: the totalitarian character of the *state,* and the authoritarian character of the *society* (*Technology* 70). Society nonetheless, is composed of individuals interacting either as autonomous units or as smaller or bigger organized groups formed spontaneously or purposefully. The smaller cell unit in society is the family, a crucial formative social agent whose attitudes adopted by its members are in dialectic relation with the social mores, values, rules, and expectations. Salomon's autobiographical work revolves mostly around her rather conservative and controlling bourgeois family functioning under the authority of dominant figures. Max Weber defines authority as "the legitimate exercise of imperative control" and imperative control as "the probability that a command with a given specific content will be obeyed by a given group of persons" (152, 153). The head of a household according to Weber exercises authority, while the state exerts power.

Salomon's artistic production is a mere reflection of the strain inflicted on her by the mass, state power, and family authority. Despite the idyllic frame, the loving and respectful relationships with her family during her childhood as represented in the first act of the Prelude with vivid colors, there are numerous other dark sketches betraying her being deprived of autonomy and independence. There is no doubt that Salomon loved her family, however, as Erich Fromm (2020) stresses, love constitutes an important parameter in a relationship of authority. When it comes to family, the internalization of authority forms and transfigures the *super-ego*, the part of the psyche which structures the moral and social consciousness. According to Erich Fromm (2020), a weak *ego* (the conscious self) is counterbalanced by a hypertrophic *super-ego* which restrains the subconscious and libidinal desires of the *id* (the dark side of the psyche). As a result, the shrunken ego becomes so compliant and submissive to society's and the family's will, that it is inclined to develop neuroses and mental maladies. That is the case of the first suicide in Salomon's maternal family line. The brother of her grandmother, a Doctor of Law, who was forced by

his mother to marry someone he didn't love for her dowry: "Your great grandmother who, although she was a very strict woman, attached great importance to class and wealth, forced him to marry a girl from a rich family and he became very unhappy with her. He spent his married life more in our home than in his—until he finally drowned himself" (540). Salomon does not omit to make reference to the fact that her father was also unwanted and disapproved, as he was considered inferior in terms of social provenance and material means.

The family in general gives its offspring "the indispensable adaptability for a specific authority-oriented conduct on which the existence of the bourgeois order largely depends" (Horkheimer, "Authority" 98). Horkheimer stresses that the bourgeois family was structured and organized not only around physical strength but also in relation to the possessions of a dominant male figure, that of the father. The substance provided was a means to establish his power and his authority over the other members of his family and submit them to his orders and own will. For Horkheimer, this is synonymous with an economically based hegemony that creates dependence, depriving women and children of affection, happiness, fantasies, dreams, and personal judgments. As a result, the bourgeois child raised under these conditions not only becomes accustomed to authority and power over other people as a fact, but he may also develop an authority-oriented character, something that is also claimed by Adorno (1950) and Fromm (2020) in their research on the authoritarian personality. Domestic and social conformity along with obedience become interrelated to such a degree, that one determines the other: "In the bourgeois golden age there was a fruitful interaction between family and society, because the authority of the father was based on his role in society, while society was renewed by the education for authority that went on in the patriarchal family (Horkheimer, "Authority" 128).

Kaplan (1998), however, argues that Nazis disrupted the family unity, reversed the gender roles and destroyed the patriarchal structure of the Jewish families. Women had not only taken over the leadership of the family, but they were also representing, defending, and sometimes saving the men. Salomon describes how her stepmother took action, after her husband was arrested and sent to labor camps, in order to liberate him:

> Luckily for him, he has a wife who possesses, in addition to a magnanimously good heart, enough charm and intelligence to intervene successfully on his behalf. (493)
>
> ***
>
> And, indeed, Paulinka's many efforts do succeed in getting Albert released. (495).

There are research studies revealing the dysfunctional features of the middle-class society in late Imperial Germany and during the Wilhelmine period, that had been revived under the Nazi rule (Taylor T, "Images of Youth"). Those were the generational conflicts, alienation, and tensions between parents and adolescent or adult children, excessive sexual restraints, and forced sexual abstinence among university students, with increased youth suicides as a result of excessive pressures and severe punishments imposed by teachers, professors and parents. These "symptoms" and "disorders" in pre-Nazi Germany were all facets of the same phenomenon: that of exerting excessive control and dominance over young people and children constantly exposed to two fundamental socialization institutions to which the bourgeoisie in that era attached great importance: family and school. Emile Durkheim published his research *On Suicide* in 1897, after having studied a significant number of self-inflicted deaths. In his analysis, although he stresses that the rate of suicides among Jews was low, he identifies four types of self-inflicted deaths, classifying among them the "fatalistic suicide," as an effect of the excessive discipline or oppression within the framework of an overregulated, commanding, and intervening society. Salomon

refers to her mother's first objection to her parents, when she decided to live alone in her bridal apartment, after her husband Albert Salomon was called to serve the German army: "Mr. and Mrs. Knarr are horrified over this first act of disobedience of their daughter" (108).

This approach moves us away from the perception of the series of suicides in Salomon's family as a purely "Jewish affair," despite the statistics of that time presenting high suicide rates among Jewish women. Popular Jewish press, such as the *Jüdische Rundschau*, in the mid-1920s, referring to the increasing feminine suicides, had attributed them to the estrangement from the Jewish traditions, to "love trouble," or to particular characteristics of single and divorced women unfit for marriage, or even to insanity resulting from inbreeding and endogamy (Buerkle, "Historical Effacements" 79-81). The Dresden Hygiene Exhibition in 1930 was talking about "Jewish nervousness," "Jewish suffering," and published a book regarding the "Jewish hygiene" in which "spiritual change," "simplicity in life," "assimilation," and "new settlement" had been highly recommended (Buerkle, "Historical Effacements" 82). The suicidal tendencies of the Jewish women added a supplementary argument to the rhetoric of degenerate races, defying and hiding, however, the high rates of self-killing among young "Aryan" citizens as well, during the previous years (especially under the influence of the romantic movement).

Jewish suicide-bereaved families were suffering from strong emotions of disgrace, dishonor, and stigmatization (Kaplan, Buerkle). That is proved by Salomon's mother's death announcement in which a fatal medical condition is reported as the reason for Franziska Salomon's loss. Besides, Salomon herself talks about degeneration in the mouth of Paula Lindberg: "Paulinka has suddenly remembered Charlotte's degenerate family on her mother's side […]" (476). Kaplan (1990) describes that at the period when Salomon lived, Jewish women were experiencing an internal conflict from the fact that although they made up a part of modern society, received an education, and had access to prestigious professions, they were also predestined to be good housewives and charged with familial obligations. They had been trapped in a dual identity as members of a traditional Jewish community and as citizens of a modern German state. Salomon depicts how women in her family had been "neglected and diminished by the restriction of defined roles and enforced traditions of Jewish and non-Jewish patriarchy" (Pounders 111).

Despite her superficial compliance with power and authority, Salomon's revolutionist spirit is constantly manifest. She even denounces her being emotionally, psychologically, and physically abused. By way of her images and texts, she reports that she had been subjected to physical violence by her governess and by her school teacher (146, 149). In another image, she describes a discussion with her grand-parents during which she receives harsh criticism and ironic comments about her choice to pursue art:

> Grandmother:
> "Are you here in the world only to draw?"
>
> Grandfather:
> "You are much too lenient with her. Why shouldn't she become a maid like all the others?" (525).

At the end of her biography she reveals that her grandfather not only urged her to commit suicide, but he had also proceeded to incestuous advancements. While being transferred to the camp in Gurs, Salomon describes the experience and proceeds to some unexpected revelations:

> Mr. Knarr and Charlotte have spent the last days in a railway car crammed with thousands of totally exhausted people. Driven from the interior of the country, chased by air raids, there people have had to leave all their possessions behind, in order to escape with their bare lives.
> Charlotte:

> "I'd rather have ten more nights like this than a single one alone with him."
> Grandfather:
> "I do not understand you. You can lie down in a bed with me just like that—if there's nothing else to be had. I'm always for what's natural." (568)
>
> ****
>
> Grandfather:
> "Now conclusively take your life, so this babble finally stops." (574).

The illustration accompanied by the above-mentioned text was her dramatic play's final gouache and had been removed and replaced by another more optimistic, after Paula Lindberg's request (Belinfante 8). Her despair and anxiety are equally evident when she and her grandfather had to share the same room in a hotel. During her conversation with the receptionist, the latter proposes that Salomon's grandfather leave the hotel immediately. But, being frightened and perhaps ashamed, she begs the receptionist and the owner of the hotel not to tell anything to her grandfather, blaming herself and talking about something that is "natural" (573).

The coercion to which she is subjected, culminates not only with her being forced to leave Germany and her real or imaginary lover against her will, to take care of a depressed grandmother and an authoritative, condescending, and probably abusive grandfather, but also with her being left in ignorance of the long family suicide history. Knowledge is a precondition of control (Foucault), as it produces and (re)directs the truth. The shadow of serial female suicides and the effort to cover and hide them not only from the rest of the society but also from their offspring seem to show evidence of an internal plan of "family biopolitics." Foucault (*The History of Sexuality*, *Discipline and Punish*, and *Abnormal*) sees the family as a sovereign institution which exercises extended authority over the children and applies disciplinary practices. In Foucault's theory, "a family that fails to produce well-disciplined and normal subjects may lose its authority over its members through the intervention of state and disciplinary agents," (Taylor Chloë 205), and as a result, it becomes itself a biopolitical and disciplinary institution. This "effacement," as Buerkle (2006) calls it, of the self-inflicted death, is based on silences and lies resonating with the Nazi regime politics of social engineering based on the improvement of the physical standards and the racial health of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the People's Community (Bauman).

Conclusions

In the present article, I tried to highlight the spiral coercion flowing throughout Salomon's "image-and-text narrative" (Benesch 51), starting from the external non-institutionalized (mass) and institutionalized (state) macro-environment, ending up in the micro-environment (family). My analytical process based on the exegetic schemes of renowned theorists of totalitarianism and authoritativeness, such as Arendt, Bauman, Adorno, Horkheimer, Fromm, and Marcuse, helped us perceive the current sociopolitical context in which Salomon lived, the impact of the rigid Nazi, but also family power, and the way Salomon (re)constructs her civil identity, along with her political and social self. Her art revolves around the deprivation of the right to free will, autonomy and independence, the tyrannical imposition, and the emotional, psychological, and physical violence. Charlotte Salomon's lyric autobiography is at the same time a biography of the unbridled rage of the crowds, the Nazi political absolutist domination and the German-Jewish family's excessive control. Through personal and intimate experiences, she recounts the history of individual units and a whole society's submission to the imperatives of the instrumental reason (Werz). She implicitly explains how meanings had been constituted exclusively through power

relations and how despotic family attitudes had already tormented their member's lives long before National Socialism reached its peak. That is an issue addressed also by Michael Haneke in his film *The White Ribbon* (2009). Salomon's illustrations, by embracing music and prose, offer "a plural vision" (Schultz and Timms 337) allowing her to describe in every possible detail the path to the Holocaust as the failure of modernism (Bauman) and as the inadequacy of a finite traditionalism (Marcuse).

Life? or Theatre? constitutes not only Salomon's autobiography and the biography of power under Nazism but also a revolutionary act expressed through modern art. Herbert Marcuse in his essay "Society as a Work of Art," juxtaposes traditional with modern art, by stressing that the former "reflects a world shaped by domination" (124), while the latter takes a strong political stance by rebelling against the false and the illusory, restoring the beauty which resides in order. For Marcuse, order is a non-repressive power, evoked and claimed by modern art as synonymous with non-violence, pacification, justice, and catharsis (moral order), as a means to passionate and socially critical analysis (Marcuse, "Society" 126). Salomon's art is a mere expression of resistance to oppressive powers, and a synthesis of personal and collective memory for a certain historical time (White 123).

> Charlotte:
> "You know Grandpa, I have the feeling as if one has to put the whole world together again." (574)
> […] she had to vanish for a time from the human surface and make every sacrifice to create her world anew out of the depths. And from that came: The Life or the Theatre??? Life or Theatre? (582, 586)

Although Salomon's life is full of disruptions (Watson) and dislocations, "through her autobiography she is able to defy the forces seeking to tear apart her subjectivity" (White 111). The only possible remedy for this young talented yet tormented girl was to be able to escape from this annihilating and overwhelming intra and extra power exercised over her, by secretly deconstructing and reconstructing herself through her rebellious art.

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From Margaret Noble to Sister Nivedita: Mapping a Colonial Woman's Journey to India in Search of a 'Home'

Abstract: While stories of travels from Britain to India during the colonial times were replete with stereotypes, the journey of an Irish Lady, Margaret Noble (1867–1911) and her subsequent transformation into Sister Nivedita (the one dedicated to the cause) was unique in many senses. Attracted by her Guru (Spiritual Master) she came to Calcutta, India on her spiritual quest in 1898, where she immersed herself in the local culture, learned the language, and significantly contributed to women's progress. Her involvement with local intelligentsia and nationalism highlighted the Indian values, talents and erudition to the outside world. Her journey showcased her spirit that could transcend the rigid European orthodoxy for White women in a colonized land and placed her as one of the leading architects of modern India. Earlier studies have not recognised Nivedita as a social reformer. Most importantly, works on her seldom refer to her struggle and subsequent triumph over limitations imposed on her in terms of racial othering, geographical positionality and gendered subjectivity. This paper addresses her struggle and celebrates her successful navigation in transcending the limitations and restrictions of both her Irish culture and the Indian culture and highlights her significant contributions towards human race at large.

Keywords: Nationalism, Travel, Swami Vivekananda, Sister Nivedita, Hindu Theology

Introduction

Travelling has been recognised as an important part of human development, an intimate part of human existence, an act of exploration of the self as well as of the others. Bacon in "Of Travels" (1625) suggested that one must travel to become truly educated and enlightened (79). Travel was a regular pastime for the aristocrats, an opportunity that was exclusive for the rich and elite male members of the society, while unchaperoned travel for women from any social class was difficult, to say the least. The advent of colonisation opened travelling opportunities for the White male population, who also saw it as a prospective career (Disraeli, II xiv). And while the White men were sent to colonies like India to execute imperial governance, often their female counterparts, also called the 'memsahibs,'[34] had a chance to accompany them. Of course, their experiences were different, as they had to represent the homeland and appropriate the role of an ideal wife, sister or a girl-friend to the colonial males. Their varied experiences were well documented in travelogues written by Maria Graham, Ann Deane, Julia Maitland, Eliza Fay and many others (O'Loughlin iii).

The handful of White women travelling to India from the West, especially Britain, could primarily be divided into three specific groups. Owing to the extensive circulation of the exotic picture of the country, the rich and aristocratic women came to India to taste the exotic, their trips filled with the excitement of hunting, gaming, and other adventures in the hills and the plains, experiences heavily fanned by their male counterparts and select quarters of Indian royalty. A second group of women came in search of a husband in the colonised country, as there was no dearth of marriageable White men in the East who could guarantee not only wealth but also a respectable life. The third group came as mothers, wives and daughters along with the colonial servants who, as suggested by Percival Spear, were influential in

[34] The wife of a British official

augmenting the already existing gap between the colonizer and the colonized (140). Suresh Chandra Ghosh in *The Social Condition of the British Community in Bengal: 1757-1800* (1970) argued that the raging madness of the colonial memsahibs to keep up with the European fashion would put their sisters across the sea to shame: "If hairdressers could drive a profitable business in Calcutta, so could tailors… a tailor named Martin… found his business so profitable that he refused to exchange it for a post in the Company's service, and at the end of ten years was able to give his friends a splendid dinner and return to Europe with a fortune…" (116).

The White women who travelled to India were mostly accompanied and had social liabilities as well as obligations to bind them. However, to embark on a journey all alone was not quite a usual case for women at that time. The Victorian social code by no means encouraged average female travelers to explore a colonial land without designated supervision. Behind the implication of such restrictive code of conducts, there probably functioned the cultural anxiety over protecting the White females, the prized possession of the empire, and the cherished counter image of the native female. During the Raj, there existed a fear about the White man being influenced into becoming like a native, either by over associating with the natives, or worse, by marrying their women. The women, too, were not free from such speculations. They were not only strictly advised to keep distance from their native counterparts, but there also existed a fear that they might become like them. Ann L. Stoler in her essay "Making Empire Respectable: The Politics of Race and Sexual Morality in 20th Century Colonial Cultures" argues that the European White female was made to deal with racial domination and internal social distinctions, differently from the White male "because of their ambiguous positions, as both subordinates in colonial hierarchies and as active agents of imperial culture in their own right" (634).

One of the socially accepted reasons for these women's travel to the colonies was therefore to make sure that the White men remained uncorrupted by native females. While the colonial government nearly legalized prostitution in India (Liddle and Joshi 73-74), White men were never encouraged to enter into marital agreements with native females for whatsoever reason. Socio-cultural interaction as well as exchanges were not much promoted between the 'memsahibs' and the natives. In the face of the existing binaries of race and gender, Margaret Noble's journey in India was different, as it not only transcended the social, religious, cultural, and even linguistic borders within a colonial land, it also rejuvenated her spiritually and, in the process, steered an entire country towards progress.

Margaret Noble came to Calcutta, India to fulfil her Guru (Spiritual Master) Swami Vivekananda's dream of an empowered India, and stayed there even after his death. This paper analyses how the Irish lady slowly, but steadily, became Sister Nivedita (literally translated as the one who had dedicated herself to a cause) and how her journey from the West to India in quest of a home (spiritual at first, and then a literal one) shaped her own character, and in the process, brought into limelight India's potential as a modern nation that was systematically denigrated by an oppressive colonial rule.

The biographical accounts of Sister Nivedita's life, written by authors like Debanjan Sengupta and religious figures like Swami Sarvabhutananda confirm that since her childhood, she had a strong inclination towards spirituality due to her upbringing in a deeply religious Irish family. Her natural intelligence and talents made her a woman of letters in London. As a member of The Sesame Club, a hub of London intellectuals, which was frequented by G.B. Shaw, W.B. Yeats and Thomas Huxley, she was well-known in the contemporary literary circle before she met Swami Vivekananda by sheer chance. Although she was initially unsure of Vivekananda's philosophical foundations, she was eventually drawn to the young Indian sage whose intense knowledge, farsightedness, and deep vision appealed to her immensely (Sengupta 23). Swami Vivekananda's influence on her was so profound that she travelled all the way from Britain to India and initially settled in Calcutta to be near him as a sincere disciple. Margaret Noble became Sister Nivedita after becoming the follower of Vivekananda, who had instructed her to "…stand on your

own feet and not be under the wings of… anybody else" (Vivekananda 511). In becoming Sister Nivedita, Margaret Noble gave up her stereotypical role of an Irish woman bounded by Victorian moral codes. Her vow to a celibate life under the aegis of the religious Hindu society Ramakrishna Mission made her an independent woman, who could no longer be controlled by a patriarchal set-up. Her education had given her a fierce spirit that Swami Vivekananda had by then realized through their interactions, and he felt that Sister Nivedita could take over the role of a light bearer in the lives of Bengali women, still suffering from patriarchal domination and prejudices. However, most of the available biographical accounts of her life neglect her spiritual journey, which is the focus of this paper.

As this paper traces Margaret Noble's spiritual transformation to Sister Nivedita, it draws inspiration from Virginia Woolf's words in *The Three Guineas* (1947, 2006): "As a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country…" (197), to highlight the metamorphosis of a Western woman who deliberately appropriated the identity of an Indian woman at the call of her Guru. Unlike many of the other British women of her time, who stereotypically played the roles of colonial housewives and immersed themselves in decadent luxury, Sister Nivedita abundantly used her agency and connection in Europe as a White woman and brought in meaningful changes to the native culture. It was not an easy task: from a colonial perspective, there was always this 'trap' of getting degraded into a native; from the Indian perspective, she could be another White person with a claim to superiority coming from a non-Hindu religious background and a foreign culture and thus not to be trusted. Nivedita could successfully navigate these challenges as she became flexible in her role-playing, constantly adjusting and changing with her experiences and time.

The flexibility that we see in Sister Nivedita's appropriating this multiple identity came from her extensive travels within India, which made her realise the diversity and the legacy of an old civilisation, especially the Hindu way of living that embraces and nurtures differences for self-upliftment and social empowerment. In her journal titled the *Notes of Some Wanderings with the Swami Vivekananda* (1913), Nivedita documented her self-transformation as she closely observed her Guru as a travelling companion. She documented in her journals and diaries how she transformed as a person after coming to India, which further motivated her to contribute to the development of the country at the juncture of its struggle for independence. Lizelle Reymond's biography, titled *The Dedicated: A Biography of Sister Nivedita* (2017), allows the readers to have a sneak peek into the enormous contribution made by Sister Nivedita towards India's regeneration. While Sister Nivedita has been widely celebrated in spiritual circles, her role as a distinct social reformer and crusader has remained under-appreciated. This paper demonstrates her role in shaping India's destiny as a social and political figure that transcends her narrow spiritual identity that was erstwhile celebrated. In the process, it also addresses Nivedita's struggle to transcend the limitations imposed by a patriarchal set-up both in Britain and India, in terms of the gendered role a colonial woman should play in the native land, and her subsequent triumph through resilience and hard work.

This paper is divided into sub-sections dealing with Nivedita's spiritual training under her Guru, her involvement in women education and empowerment, her liaison with the local intelligentsia, most notably with Rabindranath Tagore and Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose, her support to the cause of Indian nationalism and a final assessment of her pivotal role in India's regeneration.

Sister Nivedita in India: Her Initial Days

Swami Vivekananda was aware of the condition of women in India, who were trapped within the layers of social and religious customs that didn't allow them to understand their real value. Sudha Emani's *The Ideal Woman* (2018) presents a beautiful rendition of Vivekananda's thoughts formerly brought together by Swami Ranganathananda in *Our Women*: "Swami Vivekananda looked upon human life as an

outward expression of our inner spirituality… if women's spiritual core is nurtured, their children would become ideal world citizens" (Emani vii).

For Swami Vivekananda, Sarada Maa (the Holy Mother) was the ideal woman who was full of inner wisdom and a selfless kindness that could heal anyone who would come to her. He believed that if women are given proper education, they will positively contribute to the progress of the nation. His vision of India was built on the idea of gender equality, and he looked up to an ideal woman as the one having "an intense religious consciousness, a rational mind, clarity of thought and a kind heart" (196). During his travel to the West, Swami Vivekananda was very much impressed by the degree of freedom enjoyed by the Western women in comparison to their Indian sisters. In "Vivekananda's Vision of Indian Women and the Situation Today," Anjona Chattopadhyay writes:

> Swamiji had praised profusely certain positive qualities which the Western women had. He wanted Indian women to inculcate those qualities. The Western women were educated, beautiful, intellectually sound, and they enjoyed freedom to decide the course of their lives themselves. Women in India too, Swamiji believed, must adopt these good qualities. However, he had cautioned that a balance must be struck between the 'angel in the house' and the 'professional woman' in public life. Women must be allowed to have their own choice in respect of things ranging from very personal matters like marriage to the profession they choose to go for. The new woman must equip herself with knowledge which may help her in asserting her own identity, confidence and self-respect. (39)

Swami Vivekananda could locate these positive qualities in Margaret Noble, the Irish Lady that he met. So, when Margaret Noble approached him for guidance, he urged her to come to Calcutta and serve India.

A ship named "Mombassa" brought her to Calcutta, the first capital of British India, and she took shelter in Bagbazar, one of the most elite and conservative quarters of Calcutta, where she began her training in Bengali, as arranged by Swami Vivekananda. Swami Vivekananda had understood that if the lady had to stay and work for the development of the local women, then she must become one of them or at least have an in-depth idea about their society and culture. It was on the morning of March 29, 1898, that he officially made Margaret his disciple through a ritualistic process during which she became a part of the Ramakrishna sect. She was renamed Nivedita, a Bengali word for the "truly dedicated."

After coming to Calcutta, along with her immersion in the local culture, Nivedita earnestly submitted herself to the spiritual tutelage of her Guru, who had been initiated by Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa and instructed to simultaneously serve the world along with his spiritual practices. In this way, one could contribute to the greater good of the society while striving for one's own personal upliftment. Swami Vivekananda followed the same model while training Sister Nivedita. He initiated her into spirituality by teaching her meditation and ways of controlling the mind, body, and emotions. At the same time, he instructed her to take up the cudgels of social service for the marginalized Indian population, especially women, reeling under the oppressive colonial rule. Emboldened by his instructions, Sister Nivedita then dedicated herself to social service. Her extraordinary social works manifested her true devotion to her Guru, and the contribution to women upliftment was the first step on her journey.

Sister Nivedita as a Social Crusader: Education, Empowerment and Service

In spite of all the support and inspiration that Sister Nivedita received from her Guru, her task was not an easy one. Nivedita was fighting against all odds as the contemporary Hindu society was full of prejudices against women's education. A majority of the population even in a city like Calcutta believed that a woman who received education was destined to be a widow soon after her marriage. Child marriage was common at that time, and therefore not much importance was given to educating women (Idisha Biswas 2). The purdah system, a practice of secluding women from the outer world or public view, was

very much prevalent, making formal education for girls a real challenge. There were some schools for women established by members of the British gentry, but the Hindus were suspicious of their intentions of converting the girls to Christianity. Partha Sircar in his article "Early Women's Education in Bengal and India" comments that it was in 1849 that John Drinkwater Bethune established an influential school for women, which probably was the only one to attract a considerable number of female students. However, most girls were left uneducated owing to the conservative social structure and practices. To counter this, Nivedita had to act prudently, as she was still considered an outsider as a White woman, an "othered" entity subjected to religious and cultural suspicion.

To overcome the limitations she was facing as an "outsider," Nivedita started making friendships and alliances with the local people, especially the local intelligentsia. As her immediate goal was to set up a school exclusively for girls, she needed an insight into the socio-cultural complexities that existed in Bengal at that point in time. In the nineteenth century Bengal, to run an institution for women's education required a lot of support from the male elite of the society. Nivedita's sharpness of mind and visible erudition was highly respected within the core circles of Brahmo Samaj, and because of that she was invited to deliver a lecture on every Thursday.[35] Clearly, she used such exchanges to highlight her plans involving female education. The eminent Tagore family (the famous Rabindranath Tagore belonged to this family) was one of the most influential Brahmos of that age and their socio-cultural influence was immensely high. David Kopf in *The Brahmo Samaj and the Shaping of the Modern Indian Mind* (1979) commented that the members of the Brahmo Samaj were the "progressive wing of the Bengal intelligentsia" and were known to respond favourably to intellectual imports from the West, ranging from the Unitarian Social Gospel to the latest European philosophical and theological schools, such as humanism and positivism. Hence, due to their exposure to European education and philosophy, Nivedita found natural allies in the members of the Brahmo Samaj clan. The spontaneous association of Nivedita with the Brahmos also allowed them to somehow strengthen their belief in the nineteenth century European liberal education. This worked in favour of Nivedita's educational plans for the women of Bengali society, and made her a highly known and much revered personality of the progressive Bengali community (Kopf 89). This helped Sister Nivedita significantly in her future endeavours in and around Calcutta.

On the other hand, Sister Nivedita continued with her alliance with the local women to launch her school. In those days, she did not find a lot of women of her stature and merit; however, through her loving nature and her appropriating the native language, she made quick inroads in many aristocratic families. Her biggest acceptance came in the form of Sri Maa Sarada Devi, wife of Sri Ramakrishna Paramhansa. In her diary, she recorded the day of March 17, 1898 as "A Day of Days." On this day, along with two other European ladies, she met Sri Maa Sarada Devi, who embraced her as her own daughter and called her by the name of 'Khooki' (a little girl) from that very day. An overwhelmed Nivedita felt assured of her acceptance in the Indian society the moment she was so warmly received (*Nivedita of India* 19). The importance of this acceptance was later stressed by Swami Sarbabhutananda in *Nivedita of India* (2002), where he describes how Sri Maa Sarada's wilful visit to Nivedita's school for women brought in a lot of excitement and joy in Nivedita's life. Nivedita started a school for girls in 1898 and the young girls from all over the city enrolled to attend her classes. Speaking about Sarada Devi's visit, Nivedita recorded in her diary, "I cannot imagine a grander omen than her blessings, spoken over the educated Hindu womanhood of the future" (22).

[35] Established in 1828, Brahmo Samaj was not just a group of religious practitioners of monotheism, but a collective social circle of the crème de la crème of the Bengali society, who earnestly valued Western education to a great extent.

Speaking about her experiences during her initial days in Calcutta, Sister Nivedita in *The Web of Indian Life* (1904), revealed many of her experiences as a European lady in a colonial land. Her free movements within the quarters of the White gentry of the ruling class as well as the native residents allowed her to grow a rationally conceived and emancipatory idea about the nation in which she had to function. Even after her conversion to the Ramakrishna Order, she did not limit herself to select religious duties, but rediscovered her role as an educationist dedicated to the development of the women of colonial Bengal. In her epistolary reminiscences anthologized in *Letters of Sister Nivedita, Vol. I* (1913), she indicated that her life before responding to the call of Swami Vivekananda was quite different and her rather uneventful life transformed into an absolutely unique existence after his magic touch. Vivekananda's influence and his deep assurance could be traced from the early days of her stay in Calcutta. Nivedita also recounted how she initially felt confused and missed her homeland after reaching Calcutta. Her job was difficult and challenging, as she negotiated a seemingly opposite culture. Describing her initial experience, Sister Nivedita wrote to Mrs. Eric Hammond: "I cannot find the exact word you see... The Swami thought it was temper… The last 4 weeks of the voyage were full of joy—the middle 3 emphatically and increasingly so. Now I feel a little bit of England still there..." (*Letters of Sister Nivedita, Vol. I* 20).

Her acknowledgement of the existing English culture in her, which was also noticed by the Swami, was eventually put to the use of the nation. Her physical journey into a new culture allowed her to rediscover herself within an overarching light of Indian civilization. Her relentless excitement was quite visible in her letters to her own people back in her country, which also suggests that the physical separation from her own motherland did not affect her, but empowered her to dedicate herself towards the greater good of humanity, under the noble guidance of Swami Vivekananda.

Sister Nivedita's second part of the training, namely the selfless service to humanity, was manifested during the outbreak of plague in Calcutta in 1898. She personally got involved in taking care of the infected patients and organized regular cleaning programmes for the locality to control further spread. She distributed pamphlets among the mass with general information. She battled not only against plague, but also against the superstitious misconceptions about the plague vaccinations. She received tremendous support from the local learned population that gave her the platform to undertake such social activities with more enthusiasm. However, such occasions also revealed the difficult nature of her work. In her newspaper column, "Calcutta Notes by an English Lady," which was published on March 4, 1898, she wrote how unnecessary fear among the natives regarding plague inoculation had started mob agitation and how the local government had to step in to pacify the angry crowds:

> A few great Hindu families, notably the Tagores, stood firm, in the hope of allaying the agitation, but nothing was availed till at noon on Saturday the Government issued a proclamation announcing that optional inoculation was to make segregation unnecessary, and that the feelings of the people would be respected as far as possible even in case of an epidemic. (28)

When for the second time Calcutta became infested with plague in 1899, even then Nivedita dedicated herself to serve the plague victims. Her selfless and sincere service is remembered not only by the Bengalis of that time, but the entire fraternity of public health and hygiene in colonial India.

Sister Nivedita and the Contemporary Intellectual Fraternity

As mentioned earlier, Sister Nivedita started interacting with the local intelligentsia as soon as she landed in Calcutta to understand and immerse herself in the Bengali culture. Due to the scarcity of educational opportunities for average Bengali women, Nivedita's initial associations consisted of the erudite male elite of the society. Other than Rabindranath Tagore, she also came in touch with Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose, the eminent Bengali scientist. Their initial interactions turned into deeper

friendship and Sister Nivedita, Rabindranath Tagore, and Acharya Jagadish Chandra Bose collaborated to highlight the achievements of "native" science and literature to the outside world. Systematic degradation by the colonial rulers and their apathy towards the native population had cast a deep shadow over the achievements of the Indians. For example, Jagadish Bose's staunch nationalism had gravely worsened his reputation among the colonial rulers. His scientific achievements were deliberately overlooked and "the Education Department of British India Government was not favourable to Bose" (Sengupta 43). Debanjan Sengupta, in his book *Nivedita & Rabindranath: The Relationship Unveiled* (2019) elaborates on how after apprehending the tension between Bose and the British Government, Nivedita intervened and thought of another way to help Bose, the scientist, continue with his work. She involved Rabindranath Tagore in her plan. In a letter that she wrote to her friend, Miss Mcleod, Nivedita unveiled her plan of helping Jagadish Chandra Bose: "Without saying anything to him [Prof Bose], I have written to Mr. Tagore to ask, cannot some Hindu prince undertake the cost of him and his work? Would it not be heavenly, to have a Native Government take up a scientific work which the British were not large-minded enough to protect?" (*Letters* 438). The plan was successful, as Tagore did convince the Maharaja of Tripura to help Bose financially so that he could continue with this scientific commitment (Visvanathan 45). Sister Nivedita's contribution to the scientific career of Jagadish Chandra Bose indeed remained crucial and came at the right time.

On the other hand, she was also a prime contributor in making the translated works of Tagore available to the European audience, as she was personally selected by Jagadish Chandra Bose as possibly one of the best translators for Tagore's works. At Bose's suggestion, Rabindranath Tagore after a lot of consideration selected five of his short stories to be translated in English which were "Post Master," "Nisithe" (At Night), "Kankal" (The Skeleton), "Cabuliwalah," and "Protibeshini" (The Lady Neighbour). However, the final selection was made by Bose, and Nivedita settled for translating the stories titled, "Chhuti" (The Leave of Absence), "Cabuliwalah," and "Dena Pawna" (The Dowry Death). Of all the English translations of Tagore's works that were published and circulated, it was critically accepted that the best ones were done by Nivedita (Sengupta 48).

Debanjan Sengupta comments: "The innermost emotions of Tagore's story were conveyed to the western readers by the sensitive expertise of Nivedita. The Bengali literary world is indebted to Sister Nivedita for being the first English translator of Tagore stories" (47-48). However, the reception did not turn out to be as grand as it was expected. It becomes very clear in a letter that Bose writes to Tagore on January 16, 1901:

> When may I get the second volume of your story collection? Three from the first have been translated. It is impossible to preserve the elegance of your language in English. I just cannot help it. But of course there is beauty in the story line. These days short stories of the countries like Norway, Sweden or Italy are a popular read here. I like to publish your write ups to help compare with those. In this land the Kipling worshippers are a majority, so don't know whether your stories would be popular. (Geddes 223)

Irrespective of the initial reception, Sister Nivedita paved the way for launching Rabindranath Tagore's works in the literary field of colonial Britain. It was not an easy task for her, as she was bringing a native author to a snobbish literary circle which was already deeply prejudiced by Rudyard Kipling's portrayal of the subcontinent in his writings. Sister Nivedita's efforts came to a full circle when Tagore won the Noble Prize in Literature in 1913, as the first Asian.

The popular belief of the "white man's burden," a colonial idea popularized by a poem written by Rudyard Kipling which associated White people, especially in the colonies, with the task of managing the affairs of colonized subjects as their moral duty, was thus overturned by Sister Nivedita through her actions. She did not act from her vantage point of a member of the colonizing race; rather she worked as

an ally and in the process, she successfully demonstrated the artistic fervor, resilience and scientific temperament of the subcontinent. She was instrumental in bringing into focus the underappreciated voices and thereby claimed a permanent place in Indians' hearts.

Nivedita and Indian Nationalism

The journey of Lady Margaret Noble alias Sister Nivedita, that had begun as a response to the call of the Guru, evolved with time. Her travels all over the country with Swami Vivekananda made her understand the pressing needs of the nation and she tried to inculcate the essential values of humanism among the masses. As a true disciple of Vivekananda, she did not restrict herself within the margins of religion, but served the country and its people in the most pragmatic ways. Her anti-colonial standing was always quite prominent and she openly criticized the colonial rule for oppressing the Indians. In his essay, "From Noble to Nivedita: Sister Nivedita and Her Passages through India, 1895-1911," Somak Biswas comments that, according to Sister Nivedita, the swadeshi or the extremist movement of Indian independence allowed the people of the country an opportunity to be respected by the whole world, something that was denied to them by the colonial masters (794). Her dedication towards the Indian struggle of Independence was inspiring because, in spite of being a White woman, she made it a point to stand up for the oppressed colonized nation and its people, vis-à-vis the existing colonial structure prevalent in India at that time.

Other than being a social reformer, a patient healer and a wonderful educationist, Sister Nivedita was also a staunch supporter of Indian freedom struggle. She formed active liaisons with the votaries of the nationalist movement in Bengal. During the 1905 Bengal Partition movement, Sister Nivedita tried to help the nationalist leaders in every possible way. She was quite close to Indian nationalist, philosopher and poet Sri Aurobindo and, using her contacts in the British circles, she would often pass on information and warn him about their future plans. For Nivedita, political freedom was synonymous with freedom of the mind. Hence, she participated in the freedom struggle as part of her humanitarian work. It is therefore no wonder that she never aspired to appropriate a political leadership role during the time; she was happy to be in the background helping the cause of the Indian nationalist movement against the British subjugation.

Sister Nivedita was a sensible, rational, and brave woman. She carefully kept in mind Swami Vivekananda's instruction of strictly maintaining a marked distance between the Ramakrishna Order and political associations. Therefore, she gradually disassociated herself from the religious society and continued with her political journey. Though such a decision caused her immense pain, she still thought that Vivekananda's vision of a great India can only be achieved in a free country, and she relentlessly worked towards achieving it. Still, her allegiance to the Ramakrishna Order was never severed as such; she identified herself as "Nivedita of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda" until her last breath (Sarvabhutananda 6).

Swami Prabhananda writes: "Sister Nivedita loved India as her own land and served Indians as her own people, but we are yet to comprehend the magnitude of her contribution to this country. If ever we are able to do so, we would certainly wonder whether such a person really existed" (qtd. in Sarvabhutananda 3).

Conclusions

Despite the fact that Sister Nivedita was a disciple of Swami Vivekananda, her recognition was not limited to her identity as a spiritual seeker. Her journey was relentless and earnestly directed towards the mission of helping others. Free from material attachments, Nivedita embarked on a journey of her own

and in her travel, inspired an entire nation towards the path of self-realization. Although there is no dearth of documents on Sister Nivedita, not much work has been done to highlight her role in the nation building. Her contributions to women's education, the social upliftment of a colonial land and the nationalist struggle for independence need to be collectively understood in the light of the history of India. In the western world, her recognition has not been as much as it should have been, despite her prolific humanitarian work in colonial India. Her character is an amalgamation of spirituality, service, intellectual liaison and nationalism dedicated to India's cause.

Nivedita was one of her own kind and her passion lifted the poor and the needy all through. Rabindranath Tagore fondly reminisced Nivedita's transformation from a spiritual aspirant to a social worker and called her the "Lokmata," "the mother of the people." Tagore openly acknowledged her inner spirit which embodied the true essence of motherhood and wrote:

> She was in fact a Mother of the People. We had not seen before, an embodiment of the spirit of motherhood which, passing beyond the limits of the family, can spread itself over the whole country. We have had some idea of the sense of duty of man in this respect, but had not witnessed wholehearted mother-love of women. When she uttered the word ''Our People'' the tone of absolute kinship which struck the ear was not heard from any other among us. (qtd. in Sarvabhutananda 91)

Coming back to Virginia Woolf's thoughts quoted at the beginning of this paper, "As a woman I have no country. As a woman I want no country…" (197), we can further conclude regarding Nivedita's uniqueness. Neither her race nor her country of origin could define her work or the temperament with which she submitted herself to the national cause of India. Her conscious decisions, from immersing herself into the practice of Hinduism, a religion so deeply condemned by Christian missionaries, to working for the progress of the colonized subjects in the field of education, science and even sanitation, testifies to her bold stance against the Empire. She made India her home, a place where she eventually died. Her initial love for India rose out of her consideration for her Guru Swami Vivekananda. She transcended this limitation and appropriated a citizenship out of a deep love for India. This was reflected in everything she did in the later part of her stay in India until her death in 1911.

Margaret Noble's journey from Ireland to India revealed before her an entirely new spectrum of human civilization. It was not only a chance for her to explore the East, but also to work towards realizing her true potential as a benevolent caregiver of humanity. In a colonized country, she had to battle with a plethora of cultural and socio-political disarrays and yet she strengthened her inner values and functioned to the best of her abilities to work towards the greater good of humanity. Sister Nivedita could have limited herself by embracing the spiritual values of India; but she chose to aspire for more than that by fully committing herself to the holistic development of India vis-à-vis the British imperial rule.

Nivedita was a phenomenal woman who inspired an entire nation. But her greatest acknowledgment came through a poem titled "A Benediction" that was written for her by Swami Vivekananda, her beloved Guru. The poem aptly sums up all that she was and had become during her journey in India:

> The mother's heart, the hero's will
> The sweetness of the southern breeze,
> The sacred charm and strength that dwell
> On Aryan altars, flaming, free;
> All these be yours and many more
> No ancient soul could dream before-
> Be thou to India's future son
> The mistress, servant, friend in one. (1-8)

Traditionally, in India, it is the disciple who pays homage to the Guru or the teacher. The poem composed by Swami Vivekananda inverts the tradition as it not only acknowledges her innermost qualities but also regards her as an exceptional being, a unique combination of a kind mother and a wise hero, who helped then and continues to inspire many Indians even today.

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History as Story, History as My (Family's) Story: *Life of a Klansman: A Family History in White Supremacy* (2020) – Book Review

Book Reviewed:
Edward Ball: *Life of a Klansman: A Family History in White Supremacy*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, August 4, 2020, 416 pp, Kindle version, $13.64

Life of a Klansman: A Family History in White Supremacy, 2020, a book that caught my attention the moment I saw it advertised in the "Legacies Links for November 28, 2022: News from CIC Members and Other Curated Links" blog,[36] together with the author's first book on the subject, *Slaves in the Family* (2014 for the Kindle Edition). I read both books as an American Studies researcher working on slavery, and, on a more personal level, as a descendant of two landowner families, whose lands were worked by peasants, in Interwar Romania.

Both books are narrative histories, and both speak openly about the author's family, first as big slave-owners—25 rice plantations, thousands of Blacks enslaved, on his father's side and second, as a Ku-Klux-Klan member great-great-grandfather, on his mother's side.

I was very much interested both in the books as such, and in the author himself, a very courageous and gifted writer, in my view. Not only does he expose a family past that others (would) have chosen to let unknown, but his narrative plus well documented prose style makes the reading easy and interesting. So, who is this author?

According to his website,[37] Edward Ball was born in 1958, in Savannah, Georgia, and raised in New Orleans, Florida, and Charleston, South Carolina. His father, Reverend Theodore Porter Ball, was an Episcopal clergyman, "a Charlestonian who moved about the South on a succession of Episcopal parish assignments" (Duke 10). His mother, Janet Rowley Ball, was a bookkeeper from New Orleans. When Edward was 12, his father committed suicide, suffering from a brain tumor. After that, the family moved to his mother's birthplace, where they "lived modestly on her earnings" (Klein 40). With scholarships and loans, Edward attended Brown University, where he studied history for two years. He didn't like it, he chose to abandon it, became a waiter in New Orleans, then went "hitchhiking in Europe" (Klein 40), and then returned to the same Brown University to study semiotics, film, and mass media. He continued with film, as an MA, at the University of Iowa. He worked as a proofreader in New York, where he also wrote book reviews and articles on film, art, and architecture. He has taught non-fiction writing at Yale University, benefited from fellowships awarded by the Radcliffe Institute at Harvard and the New York Public Library's

[36] James Dissette: "Slaves and Klansmen in the Family: A Chat with Washington College Fellow Edward Ball." *The Talbot Spy*, November 19, 2022. https://talbotspy.org/slaves-and-klansmen-in-the-family-a-chat-with-washington-college-fellow-edward-ball/
[37] https://www.edwardball.com/

Cullman Center. He also received a Public Scholar award from the National Endowment for the Humanities ("A Note about the Author" 320).

It was at the *Village Voice* that he published an essay called "White Like Who? Notes on the Other Race" on May 18, 1993, where he talked about his having grown up in the Deep South and having read "a book called *Recollections of the Ball Family of South Carolina and the Comingtee Plantation*, to read about my ancestors and the people they enslaved" (Ball, "White" 24). Thus, a memoir written by a relative in his grandparents' generation made him think for the first time about "whiteness" as being an "other," the same as "blackness" (Ball, "White" 24). And here he encountered the "familiar" "decorous talk about the 'negroes'," the "good negro" stereotypical image, and the standard white version of "the patriarchal life."

> With utmost gentility, she [the relative] described the warm emotions that accompanied the act of putting people in chains: "On all of the Ball plantations were certain families of negroes who seemed above the average: intelligent, faithful, trustworthy, and much attached to their masters and their families, which latter returned their devotion by the fullest confidence, respect, and consideration. (24)

Remembering this reading of his family memoir, Edward Ball, now an adult and a journalist, notices the pleasure whites take in talking about and describing other people. This was in March. In June the same year he attended a big family reunion organized by his Ball relatives, to commemorate their first ancestor in America and slave owner, Elias "Red Cap" Ball. Elias had come "in the Carolina colony from England in 1698 to claim his inheritance from a half-uncle: a 2000-acre portion of a plantation called Comingtee. In the 167 years that followed the first Ball's arrival, the evergrowing Ball clan amassed a dozen plantations along the Cooper, where thousands of their slaves worked the fields" (Duke 10).

First the essay, then his June family reunion he perceived as "a kind of indoctrination seminar," full of stories about the good white masters and the family's longevity and ability to hide their silver from the Yankees, during and after the Civil War, as a "pernicious nostalgia that some whites have about the old South" (Duke 13), and we have the two key moments that signaled his preoccupation with race, whiteness, blackness, slavery, and his own family history. A preoccupation which turned into deep research in the archives, those of his family and in several libraries in the South, and into his first book, *Slaves in the Family*. The book received press coverage (radio, TV, newspapers), all of which can be accessed through the author's website, and the National Book Award for Nonfiction in 1998. Six books later, in August 2020, we have his mother's family history, the Ku-Klux-Klan, which also received positive press coverage. This he wrote after he inherited his mother's aunt's papers, after his mother's death, and he also read plenty of other types of documents from that period.

The book has a "Prologue: Our Klansman," and seven parts: "Part I: The Ku-Klux Act," "Part II: *Grand blancs/*Big Whites," "Part III: Tribes," "Part IV: Introduction to an Atrocity," "Part V: White Terror," "Part VI: *Petit blancs* / Little Whites," and "Part VII: Redemption." To these add "A Note on Sources," "Acknowledgments," "Illustration Credits," "Also by Edward Ball," "Praise for *Life of a Klansman,"* "A Note about the Author," and "Copyright."

The "Prologue," a dialogue between Edward Ball and his mother, introduces us to a "sweet and bitter" story of one great-great-grandfather, Polycarp Constant Lecorgne, a Catholic who "was not a saint" like Saint Polycarp, a man with a beautiful name but who… "too bad he got up with that White League […] The business with the Ku-Klux" (7). Then he introduces the family on his mother's side: his mother's mother Edna Lecorgne, a granddaughter of Polycarp Constant; uncle Albert who "belonged to the line of Lecorgne carpenters" started by the Klansman; Bertha Lecorgne—"Aunt Bert"—and, most important, Maud Lecorgne—"Aunt Maud"—the actual "caretaker of the Klan story" (9). Finally, Edward Ball confesses to having known about the Klansman since childhood, but "I have been afraid of this story" (9). Asked during

an interview why this fear, Edward Ball admitted to have experienced quite a painful and hard time reading and writing about the "white terrorist" in his family (cf. Interview, Aug. 17, 2020).

A lot has been and could be said about this book. Still, what most surprised and shocked me was to find out what a monstrous group the Ku-Klux-Klan actually was, with no trace of the positive, if secret, *Gone with the Wind* portrait. Coming from a landowner's family destroyed by Stalinism-Communism, I used to watch the movie together with my grandmother, born and raised during her father's prosperity years, and whose life had been totally changed by Communism. We both loved the movie for its romance, for its beautiful images of an aristocratic past, and Scarlett for her determination in keeping her dear Tara and fight the "dirty Yankees." Well, my grandmother may have actually preferred Melanie, the real "lady" in the movie. I knew it was fiction and the Southern point of view, produced in 1939, White supremacy period. With such a mental and cultural-familial background on my side, Edward Ball's history of, and the massacres perpetrated by, the Ku-Klux-Klan and its variants—The Knights of the White Camellia and the White League—shocked me. Two hundred Black men killed on July 30, 1866, during the Mechanics Institute massacre! A fight between two "tribes," as Edward Ball calls them, the White tribe and the Black tribe, where the White tribe was fighting for the Whites to remain with the same rights and privileges as before. It is really impressive how the author identifies with the White tribe, assuming this past and legacy, while totally condemning them at the same time:

> Constant Lecorgne is one of my people. He is one of my family. How can I respond to the discovery of what he seemingly did? In several ways. I do not feel responsible for the crimes he seems to commit—I mean, legally responsible—for the reason that the living cannot control the acts of the dead. In the frame of the law, I do not feel culpable for the Mechanics Institute massacre. However, as a matter of conscience, I feel implicated. I feel associated with this cruel and merciless festival of violence. I feel a part of it. Because he acts on behalf of his family—our family, if you like—I have a feeling of wretchedness and shame. (162)

Speaking of which, I was fascinated by the book's psychological dimension. One idea that surfaces here and was repeated during the same interview is the actual impossibility of us, today's liberals, to compare ourselves with our ancestors in order to prove we would not have made their mistakes, we would have acted better had we lived in their times, an idea also found in African American Isabel Wilkinson's *Caste*, right from the first chapter, "The Man in the Crowd."[38] Another idea is his understanding that we, as White people, do not perceive ourselves as "part of a racial group." Therefore, his book is "trying to make White racial identity as visible, as conspicuous to us as African American racial identity is conspicuous to us" (Interview, Aug. 17, 2020). In Isabel Wilkinson's terms, Africans don't perceive themselves as Black until they come to America. [39]

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[38] "In a totalitarian regime such as that of the Third Reich, it was an act of bravery to stand firm against an ocean. We would all want to believe that we would have been him. We might feel certain that, were we Aryan citizens under the Third Reich, we surely would have seen through it, would have risen above it like him, been that person resisting authoritarianism and brutality in the face of mass hysteria. We would like to believe that we would have taken the more difficult path of standing up against injustice in defense of the outcaste. But unless people are willing to transcend their fears, endure discomfort and derision, suffer the scorn of loved ones and neighbors and co-workers and friends, fall into disfavor of perhaps everyone they know, face exclusion and even banishment, it would be numerically impossible, humanly impossible, for everyone to be that man. What would it take to be him in any era? What would it take to be him now?" (pp. xvi-xvii)

[39] "A young man emigrated from Nigeria at the age of seventeen to attend college in the United States. His father paid the tuition, and at the end of the first semester, the young man went to pick up the refund at the bursar's office. 'You speak very good English,' the clerk told him. The Nigerian man excoriated the clerk. 'Of course I speak good English,' he said. 'I speak English better than many Americans. I speak other languages as well. Don't ever say that

As the author was saying back in 1994, he is "trying to understand how my own identity is connected to catastrophic events of the past in American history—slavery. And rather than merely acknowledging the fact and mourning it… I'm trying to act on that component of my identity and transform it, I guess, make use of it in a way that's productive" (Duke 25).

A 'productive reckoning,' so to speak, means for Edward Ball to dig deep into his family's archives and into documents, diaries, and newspapers from the past, find Black people descended from his family's slaves and discover the difference between the family lore and the actual cruelty of slavery on his father's side. And not exactly a hero, as his mother's family would have it until the 1970s, but the real atrocity of the group their "hero" had belonged to.

Identity and reckoning means to publicly or privately apologize to two different slave families on the Ball side, a gesture that divided his family in a few pros and many cons. And it means to have assumed the willingness to face this "white terrorist" as his ancestor and speak about him in a book and in public interviews. One important point here, which Ball reiterates in several interviews, is his great-great-grandfather's social position. Constant Lecorgne was not among the rich or the intellectual elite of New Orleans. He was a French carpenter "who built houses for plain people, and worked on boats, and he hammered many other things" (Ball, *Klansman* 10), the most modest, perhaps, among his brothers, one of whom did own a slave plantation. He was married and had several children, some of whom died, and actually worked side by side with a Black slave sent by his mother, to help build a house, before the Civil War. Next, he went to fight as a Confederate and enrolled in one fire brigade at the end of the war. The war cost him all his fortune: money and his few slaves. Thus, his rage turned towards the Negroes who, as Ball explains, were also his competitors as a carpenter. This ordinary White man situation makes him, in the author's view, only one of maybe half of all White Americans at the time who could not accept the idea of Black citizenship and the possible equality between the two races. In the author's words, "Fifty percent of whites can claim a family link to the Ku-Klux. Perhaps the gentle reader of these words is one. If not, someone near you" (13).

The author's personal style, that of trying to bond with his distant relative, made me think about my own Interwar family and feel grateful for who they were and how they behaved. They did not own, sell, or buy people—slavery had been abolished in the nineteenth century. They had land, 250 hectares on my paternal side, worked by peasants to whom my great-grandfather gave fifty percent of the crop, plus the straws. He sold his fifty percent—grains—abroad, via a Danube village-harbor. This great-grandfather of mine was born in 1881, in a village, as a freeholder peasant.[40] He studied Law at the University of Bucharest. He was a prefect, for two years, for the Dolj county, from the People Party, probably in 1926. He met and helped, as a lawyer, one famous politician, Constantin Argetoianu. [41] He had the money to build a house in the center of Craiova, and to send my grandmother and her brother to England, to high school. He loved the land, and he loved the peasants. This was the most important lesson from his moral

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again.' He discovered that in America he was not seen for his skills or his education. He was seen as black before anything else. It was an identity he was unaccustomed to, that had no meaning back home where everyone had similar coloring. Now it seemed to mean everything." (302)

[40] The Romanian term is "moşnean" and it means, according to the DEX online: "in Țara Românească [South Romania], since the Middle Ages—a free peasant jointly owning some land inherited from a common ancestor" (my translation)

[41] Constantin Argetoianu (1871-1955): First, a member of the Conservative Party, then the founder, together with Alexandru Averescu, of the Peoples Party/ People's League in 1918, Minister of Domestic Affairs (1920), the President of Romania's Council of Ministers (September 28, 1939-November 23, 1939), President of the Romanian Senate (1938-1939)

legacy. A lesson that also came from my mother's side: to respect people's work and to be a truly fine person. He lost it all in 1949, when his life was brutally disrupted by the Communist regime, imposed by the USSR, and resulting in the dispossession and, in too many cases, long prison sentences and the killing of innocent people declared 'enemies of the people' for no other reason than owning land, lawfully obtained and carefully tended to. Now, he saw himself as a 'beggar without the black clothes,' living his old age in a little house at the outskirts of the city, in poverty.

The end of Edward Ball's story seems deeply ironic to me, a kind of retribution, perhaps. In a world where White supremacy had triumphed and segregation was installed, Constant's wife….

> In a public school, Gabrielle finds work as a "portress." A portress is a door keeper; also, some of the time, a female porter. Gabrielle is hired by a primary school at 926 Berlin Street, on the corner of Camp Street. The job is full-time, and the pay is slander, but the work comes with an important benefit, housing. Gabrielle, Corinne, and the three children move into an apartment in the back of the school. It is cramped, and the building is loud from the swarm of students during the day.
> Gabrielle the portress greets the schoolchildren, keeps attendance, and makes sure the students stay in class all day. And, like a porter, she picks up a mop and broom. […]
> To Gabrielle's consternation perhaps, it is a black public school. Everyone agrees the tribes are to be kept apart. But the black tribe needs portresses, just like the white. Gabrielle works at a black school, lives with black children all around her, every day. She is glad to have the work, to take care of her own. Or maybe she is disgusted to have work, when it is work of this kind.
> Gabrielle must be glad that her husband is dead. [….] It is 1905. She is seventy years old, then older. She works and works, and does not stop. She reaches for her mop to swab the floor, cleaning up after the black children. (286)

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